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Mouth of the River
Publication of Oyster River High School



TABLE OF CONTENTS

News	Features	Sports & Culture	Opinion
			Problematic Artists pg. 36
Grading pg. 4	Houle pg. 12	Playing on Unified pg. 26	Sports Schedule pg. 38
LADC pg. 6	Doordash pg. 14	Kinzly pg. 28	Sports Specialization pg. 40
Student Leadership pg. 8	Blansett pg. 16	Tedious pg. 30	Serial Killers pg. 42
Robotics pg. 10	Nicolosi pg. 18	Elective Recs pg. 34	Student Sections pg. 44
	Yoga pg. 20		Arts Recognition pg. 46

Dear Reader,

We are so excited to be back with our second issue of Mouth of the River for the 2022-2023 school year!

This quarter, our writers brought a diversity of content to the magazine, from discovering new clubs to almost joining a cult for the sake of a features article (Sorry, AO's mom!). In this issue, you'll get to meet lots of faces around the building, including super cool students and some of the most essential supports for students who are struggling. Make sure to look out for Abby Owens' and Grace Webb's joint articles on yoga and mindfulness to hear about their experiences and reflections visiting a Buddhist retreat and doing yoga with goats—just don't pay too much attention to how much they complain about goat poop.

Our writers also brought out their more opinionated sides this issue—you'll note that opinion is our bulkiest department! MOR aims to stay relevant on the biggest issues students face, and our opinion writers definitely fulfilled that goal. Ava Gruner pointed out imbalances in how we support music students and student-athletes, while Abby Deane, Micah Bessette, and Delaney Nadeau looked at issues within the sports world. Two out of three of us chiefs even wrote opinion articles about different aspects of how we interact with pop culture!

If you look to the cover (featuring Micah Bessette's wonderful photo editing), you'll see that it mirrors the many perspectives and frequent discussion of clubs and sports throughout the magazine. We've already discussed several of these awesome articles, but as you flip through our pages, look out for all of them!

Now, we know you're super excited to get reading about all the articles we've described, so we won't hold you up with our letter any longer. Enjoy!

Sincerely,

Libby Davidson, Tess Brown, and Zoe Selig



Meet the Staff

Curated by Hazel Stasko



Tess Brown (she/her) ('23)
Co-Editor in Chief

Tess Brown joined the magazine to become a voice for everyone so that they feel like they're being equally represented. She is passionate about her friends and schoolwork. Tess works towards building a good career for herself so that she is successful but happy. She has a scary, scruffy, 18-year-old stuffed-animal dog named Ega, and claims that Ega's survival should be counted as a special skill.



Libby Davidson (she/her) ('23)
Co-Editor in Chief

Libby Davidson joined MOR last year and continued this year because of the newsroom environment the class offers and because she loves to learn about the interests of Oyster River High School. She has been swimming competitively since she was seven years old. An essential part of her swimming team, she has taken the responsibility of creating playlists for her team to rock out to. If Fergalicious happens to cycle through, fear not, because Libby can rap all the lyrics.



Zoe Selig (she/her) ('23)
Co-Editor in Chief

Zoe Selig chose to take MOR for her second year because she loves the process of hearing a story, learning about it, and then sharing it with the Oyster River community. Zoe is passionate about activism and theater. She is a member of the Justice, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion club and a stage manager for the Oyster River High School theater department. Zoe has no special talents and claims she is a totally normal human girl.



Micah Bessette (he/him) ('24)
Media Editor

Micah Bessette has been taking photographs since seventh grade, and one of his favorite activities is to capture the beauty of the world. As Media Editor, he takes what he has learned from his passion and applies it to his job by editing and taking photos for the magazine. Photography is not his only love. Growing up around music, he loves to sing, play the electric bass, viola, ukulele, and even plays a little piano and harmonica. When he is not taking pictures or playing his long list of instruments, Micah is catching food in his mouth. Creepily good, he can catch a piece of food from almost any height or distance.



Mia Boyd (she/her) ('24)
Subscriptions & Distribution Manager

Mia Boyd took MOR to explore creating articles in different mediums and to inform and entertain the student body. She is passionate, some would say obsessed, with the idea that socks do not need to be matched. She thinks this societal norm needs to be broken, that it doesn't matter because "you cannot see them!" Since her first birthday, Mia has been able to wiggle her ears and she is a master hairstylist.



Abby Deane (she/her) ('23)
Sports & Culture Editor

Abby Deane loves the journalistic writing style and chose to take MOR to be able to write more in that style. She is passionate about basketball and has been playing with the girls' varsity team since her freshman year and playing basketball for seven years. She is a three-season athlete, playing unified soccer in the fall and running track and field in the spring. She loves spending time with her friends and family and can break into the best moon walk when requested.



Ava Gruner (she/her) ('23)
Internet Overlord

Ava Gruner chose MOR to expand her perspectives and others by informing as many people as possible of Oyster River High School students' perspectives on important issues. She is passionate about learning about different cultures and how each of us is different, socially and physically. She has been a dancer for 15 years and plans to continue through college, joining a dance team if her college offers one.



Sarah Laliberte (she/her) ('23)
Marketing Director

Sarah Laliberte chose MOR because it provided her with an outlet to do what she loves, sharing stories. By taking MOR she can share these stories through writing, videos and other forms of communication. Sarah is interning in the preschool program at the school and is passionate about working with kids. She plans to be an elementary school teacher. She loves to travel but be careful if you decide to go on a trip with her. She might need an extra suitcase as she is a self-proclaimed "professional over packer."



James Li (he/him) ('24)
Archive Manager

James Li wants to learn more about Oyster River High School and the Oyster River Cooperative School District community. He is passionate about music and math, but he hates word problems. He has played the piano for nine years and plans to continue playing for the rest of his life. During the pandemic, at the request of his 8th grade gym teacher James learned how to juggle three objects.



Delaney Nadeau (she/her) ('24)
Events Coordinator

Delaney Nadeau loves the journalistic style of writing and joined MOR to share important events and issues in the Oyster River community. She is passionate about golf and has been a member of the varsity golf team since freshman year. Although Delaney can type quickly, she is unable to do it without her eyes glued to the keyboard.



Abby Owens (she/her) ('24)
News Editor

Abby Owens is excited to be a part of MOR because it allows her to explore different writing styles and gives her the opportunity to talk with interesting people and share their stories with the Oyster River community. She also is thinking about becoming a foreign correspondent. She is passionate about the fact that cinnamon cheerios should never be mixed with milk and loves pumping gas on a snowy winter day with her gas hat secure on her head. If you are ever in need of entertainment, Abby can rectify that: she is able to quote the entire Pearl Harbor 2001 script by heart.



Justin Partis (he/him) ('23)
Features Editor

Justin Partis chose to take MOR to share his writing with others. He also vowed to never write another book report after Essentials of English, and MOR helps him accomplish his goal. He is motivated by other people's happiness and is passionate about music, skiing, hiking, basketball, and expanding his knowledge. He plays cello for the orchestra and people are surprised to learn he has a great singing voice!



Hazel Stasko (she/her) ('24)
Layout Editor

Hazel Stasko decided to take MOR because she was excited by the prospect of reporting on important issues in the community and talking to people affected by them. She is passionate about her studies and sports and adores chocolate milk. She is currently in a milk phase, thinking about it at least once a day. Her special skill is thinking she's the best driver in her friend group and being a master back-seat driver.



Grace Webb (she/her) ('23)
Opinion Editor

Grace Webb chose to take MOR after feeling restrained by the small audience her stories reached, and is excited to share relevant important stories with the Oyster River community. When she is not in school, she enjoys the outdoors by hiking in the White Mountains, downhill skiing, ice skating, or hammocking. Grace also spends a lot of time in the dance studio after school and participates in social justice advocacy. Along with all these amazing skills and passions, more importantly, she can get rid of her hiccups by willing them away in just 15 seconds.

Mouth of the River Mission Statement

Mouth of the River seeks to reliably inform the student body, as well as the surrounding community, of interesting and newsworthy content in a modern, compelling format. Our goal as a staff is to give voice to the students of Oyster River, and have it heard by all our students. The opinions expressed in Mouth of the River represent those of the writers and staff.

Competency Craziness

Upon turning in their first papers for Anatomy and Physiology this year, students were presented with three different grades: 'Structure and Function,' 'Systems and Interactions,' and 'Nature of Science.' There was no mistake, however. Teachers had begun changing how they report grades.

Beginning this year, some teachers at Oyster River High School (ORHS) have begun reporting grades by competency. This shift to reporting percentage grades on assignments by competency, rather than in summative or formative categories, is an option for teachers but is not required. In previous years, teachers were not able to report by competency, even though most had been using competencies in their teaching well before now. This has allowed teachers to experiment with reporting by competency in their classrooms if they feel comfortable making that change this year.

Competencies in education are general areas of understanding that students show competence in through assignments. For example, 'Structure and Function' and 'Patterns' could be competencies in a science class, 'Decision-Making' and 'Economic Models' in an economics class, or 'Organization' and 'Voice and Audience' in an English class. These competencies can be and have been used as standards for teachers to address when grading students' work, as feedback tools, or as goals for students to work towards. This year, though, teachers now have the option to use these competencies to express their grades, too.

The usage of competencies in curriculum is not novel, however. Competency-based education was implemented throughout New Hampshire in 2013 when a change to the state policy Ed 306.27 enforced a move towards individualized education for students, which included the usage of competencies in all schools in the state. All teachers at ORHS have identified competencies within their curriculum since the implementation of this policy, and many use them to grade student work. However, that was not required in that policy change, and neither was reporting by those competencies. This year is the first year that ORHS is allowing teachers to begin reporting their grades by competency, rather than limiting them just to using competencies within a traditional grade reporting system, if teachers want to make that change.

For teachers at that time, the change to competency-based education meant a fundamental change to how they taught classes. Marjke Yatsevitch, an English teacher, has found the change to competencies beneficial for providing clear feedback to students. "The conversation's gotten easier, at least for me," she says. "It's made it easier to [say], 'I know exactly what I'm asking of you,' and

we can clarify that language and then move forward."

Yatsevitch also added that this helps in her classes, saying, "I have sort of a clear north star for what we're aiming for. Say I teach a writing course. The key competencies that I'm trying to get kids to reach are, you know, writing for the real world. That's the way it's written into our competency system for the English department. I broke that down into 6 standards: [...] meaning, evidence, audience, order, voice, and the writing process. So those are sort of the areas that I'm looking for evidence in." These grades are not reported in PowerSchool, but they are an integral part of the process behind forming the overall assignment grades that teachers do report.

The change to competency-based education has allowed teachers to focus more on students providing evidence of proficiency. "I'm shifting from you thinking you're earning points [on assignments] to you now understanding that you're giving me evidence," says Yatsevitch.

Further, shifting to reporting by competency allows students to see their grades in terms of the competencies they are already working with and approach assignments knowing that they will be graded on their competence in skills and course content, rather than just their overall quality of and completion of a given assignment.

However, these benefits change from course to course. Some classes don't translate well into competencies simply due to their nature, and thus reporting by those same competencies isn't effective. David Hawley, a social studies teacher, has found that some classes he teaches, such as Psychology, don't align well with the competencies used throughout the Social Studies department. This is likely due to the curriculum of these classes being developed before competencies were even a possibility at ORHS. Altering entire curriculums to allow for competencies to be implemented effectively is tedious.

Additionally, drastically changing course content and assignments to align with competencies that were not designed for that specific course could harm students more than help them, as it would result in additional material that isn't relevant to the scope of the course. Celeste Best, a science teacher, teaches a Forensics course. That course only addresses three of the five competencies used by the science department: Nature of Science, Structure and Function, and Patterns. The remaining two competencies, Energy and Matter, and Systems and Interactions, don't get addressed by the content in the class, so Best doesn't grade using them. "In



Forensics, [...] although I would love to crash cars into buildings and figure out how fast they were going, the energy portion is not as important as [being able to] go out and look at the tire tracks for the patterns."

Further, not every class needs to address every competency. For example, not all science classes need to cover all five science competencies. "The picture is four years. At the end of four years, have students been exposed to all these competencies multiple times in different ways?" says Best. Students should be able to take any combination of classes they want while still gaining competence in those competencies by the end of their high school careers.

Because of the differences between course content, competencies cannot be standardized across departments. "The way [the competencies] were framed for social studies is gonna be inherently different than how they are framed for a more objective class like a science or world language," says Hawley.

Sometimes, however, courses can benefit from changes due to competencies. For example, Best has shortened the skin unit test in her Anatomy and Physiology course to be only five free-response questions, rather than eight or nine, as those five would provide evidence for her in all five competencies. The extra questions were redundant, as all the concepts and competencies that needed to be covered were addressed already elsewhere in the assessment.

Adam Lacasse, a business and economics teacher, has made similar changes to his assessments since moving to reporting by competency. "I'll ask myself after every assessment that I give, 'Does this actually measure what the purpose was? Does it directly tie to a competency? How does this help in the future?'" says Lacasse. If those questions don't have an answer, or if the answer is 'no,' then, "it's probably time that you remove that from your curriculum and find something else that does work."

However, these changes don't come easy for every class and every teacher. This is often due to teachers feeling uncomfortable with the shift to such a new and experimental grading system, or because the teacher simply doesn't see a reason for the change. Having multiple systems in place at once that overlap with each other creates confusion among teachers and students alike.

For many teachers that confusion is only a speed bump, not a blockade. "If you want to make everyone happy, don't be a leader. Go sell ice cream. You're bound to create some unrest or conflict or struggles every time you try to shift anything with everyone. It's not an easy process," says Lacasse. As more and more teachers begin reporting grades by competency, both teachers and students will become more familiar and comfortable with the new system, and the confusion surrounding reporting by competency will ease.

For now, though, teachers will continue making the shift to reporting by competency when and if they see fit. As teachers continue experimenting with this new system, only time will tell if future students will continue seeing assignments reported by competencies in PowerSchool.

-Justin Partis



Britta Bartlett: ORHS's First Full-Time Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor



Oyster River High School (ORHS) contracted their first full-time Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor (LADC), Britta Bartlett, to help with the increased needs of those struggling with mental health and substance abuse.

Bartlett works with students struggling with addictive behaviors, including substance abuse problems such as the use of alcohol and drugs. While this is her specialization and focus at the school, she is also a licensed mental health professional and an accessible resource for students regarding mental health, working to provide a safe space for all students.

She originally got a bachelor's degree in Psychology and then a master's degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling with a concentration in substance use. When Bartlett first started, she wanted to work in the prison system with inmates to figure out the reasoning behind their substance abuse, helping to prevent re-incarceration. Then, her path shifted, and she began working with adolescents.

"[Substance abuse and mental health concerns] start at a very young age...so hopefully through getting to work with [students], we can avoid prolonging [these struggles],

setting them up [for success]. With everything going on in the adolescent world right now, I think it's important that [students] feel like they have some supports and resources available to them," said Bartlett.

In prior years, specifically throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a significant increase in substance abuse at ORHS, as well as mental health crises. Before this, ORHS had a part-time LADC, who was a resource for students for about 20 hours a week while also facilitating her own mental health practice. However, as students' needs substantially increased, her availability drastically decreased. "During COVID, her private practice exploded, so she became super busy...she couldn't give us even the 20 hours a week that we had [been receiving], and her absence was really felt," said Jason Baker, a School Counselor at ORHS.

"Personally, I acknowledge my limitations. I'm not up to date on the best practices in treating substance abuse. The worst thing you can do in a helping profession is create [the idea] that you're helping when you're not. [Substance abuse] is a more intense level of need our kids have than

we're trained to support as a school counselor," said Baker. He strongly felt a full-time LADC was needed to ensure that students who are struggling receive the proper help they need.

While Bartlett's role is still being defined based on the specific needs of students at ORHS, she is largely focused on working with students who have been identified to struggle with addictive behavior, whether that be self-identified, or identified by someone else, such as a parent, teacher, or friend.

"It may not be drugs or alcohol. It could be addiction to energy drinks or some maybe maladaptive eating patterns or exercise or cell phones, you know, any behaviors that are interfering with daily life," noted Bartlett.

anonymous student source who meets with Bartlett.

Baker touched on this as well, wanting to ensure students that confidentiality is a priority, and something they have to legally abide by. "If anyone's worried that she's going to report to parents or leadership up front or anyone that a kid disclosed they're using, she's not. She can't; she would lose her licensures through the New Hampshire Board of Mental Health Practice." Without her license, she wouldn't have a job. While having a job isn't her only motivation to maintain confidentiality, that fact can add a layer of security for students considering meeting with her.

While Bartlett is currently on maternity leave, she proactively worked with students she was seeing to ensure they receive adequate support in her absence through school

"With everything going on in the adolescent world right now, I think it's important that [students] feel they have some supports and resources available to them."

As mentioned before, Bartlett is also a licensed mental health professional, working to help students with related struggles, as well as encouraging students to be mindful of their mental health. This has allowed Bartlett to enter the Counselor On-Call system at ORHS, which ensures that each day there is a counselor available solely for unplanned student needs, whether that be a mental health crisis or someone who may just be having a rough day.

"She takes on-call students as well, so [students are able to] drop in on her whenever they need," said Shannon Caron, the director of counseling at ORHS. Because of Bartlett's more flexible schedule, she can also serve as an extra counselor for the days she isn't on-call.

counselors or outpatient support. The school has also re-contracted the previous LADC for the time being to help the school counselors provide support for struggling students.

Overall, Bartlett hopes that her office can be a safe space for many students. "I'm available to students who may be more nervous or haven't even shared [about their addiction] with anyone. Sometimes, you know, there's a stigma out there around addiction which can [be a barrier] for kids," she said.

Baker reiterated this. "She's really a resource to all students, and no one should be afraid to see her. Whatever fears, concerns, or hesitations they would have about meet-

"The confidentiality piece acts as a safety net, and really provides security which you may not get when talking to a school counselor."

A significant aspect of Bartlett's job is confidentiality, which is something that Bartlett wanted to make very clear. "It's not like I'm calling your parents after every time we meet and informing them what's happening, of course, unless there's a safety issue. Parents don't need to be notified at all [if you see the LADC]. I know that can be a huge barrier, but if someone stops by, it's not like I'm calling their parents to let them know," she said.

"Having someone that you can be open with to receive support and resources is really nice...the confidentiality piece acts as a safety net, and really provides security which you may not get when talking to a school counselor," said an

ing with her, they'll be dispelled pretty quickly [once you meet her]. I just hope no one is hesitant to walk through her door," he said.

Bartlett truly emphasized that she is here for all students and wants to be someone who students feel comfortable coming to. "My door is always open for students. I am ready to meet with whoever wants support, whatever the reason may be."

- Sarah Laliberte
Image Courtesy of Britta Bartlett

New Committee in Town



The Leadership Advisory Committee, run by Oyster River High School (ORHS) Principal Rebecca Noe, is one of the newest groups at ORHS. Started as a project by two students from a Sociology class, the committee hopes to create positive change in the community of the school.

The main goal of the Leadership Advisory Committee is to allow Noe to incorporate further connections and more voices from students where they discuss various topics on

“I was kind of bad-mouthing [the Leadership Advisory Committee]. Like ‘oh, it’s just a worse Senate.’”

how the school could be improved. However, many people have a misconception that Leadership Advisory Committee is just Senate but worse, which people who attend the committee feel is wrong.

But where did this committee come from? During Elsie Paxton’s (‘23) Sociology class last year, she had a project

with Will Grove (‘23) which required her to find something in the school and improve on it. “I focused on how I believed that especially after COVID, but even before COVID, I saw a disconnect within the student body, and a lack of community. So, I wanted to combat that in different ways.”

When Noe found out what they wanted to do, she reached out to Grove and Paxton to propose her idea. “I said, ‘would you really be interested in starting something like this?’ Because I would love to have students who want to talk more about the school, and how to keep improving and meet,” she explained.

After its creation, the Leadership Advisory Committee started discussing a multitude of topics, ranging from the current schedule to sophomore electives. “It’s kind of students just bouncing ideas off of each other, and personally listening and asking questions,” said Paige Burt (‘23), the student school board representative.

For example, regarding sophomore electives, Noe was not aware of the unpopularity of the lack of choice within electives. “[Noe] said that she was going to keep that elective system going for at least five years, but we don’t like it. We think there are benefits to changing it back to the way



Noe (left), Grove (middle), and Paxton (right) discussing ideas during a Leadership Advisory Committee meeting.

it was. So, we keep having that conversation,” added Burt.

Noe also feels that more student opinions like these help her direct the school in the right direction. “I’d like to do it because I don’t get a lot of communication necessarily from class officers or [Student Athlete Leadership Team], unless it’s around the pep rally or certain events that we’re doing. So, I really want to know what [students] feel we need to work on and what they feel we do really well.”

The Senate’s job in the school seems similar, however. Lucas Savage (‘24) explained his role as a senator: “I work

“I really want to know what [students] feel we need to work on and what they feel we do really well.”

with all the other senators and Jaclyn Jensen, our senate advisor, to help improve the school, connect with students, and work with them to make the school a better place.”

This has made some believe that the committee is not especially useful. Prior to joining, Tyler Nelson (‘23) the senior class treasurer, shared this belief. “I was kind of bad-mouthing [the Leadership Advisory Committee]. Like ‘Oh, it’s just a worse Senate.’”

However, the difference seems pretty clear. Paxton said that commitment could be the deciding factor. “It can be hard to know whether somebody’s really passionate about Senate, but everybody who’s at the Leadership Advisory

Committee and attending is there because they want to be there. They’re taking a flex to be there.”

Additionally, while Senate is elected by students, the Leadership Advisory Committee is a lot less formal. “Not everybody is a leader in the way that you’re going to get up in front of a group and talk to everybody, but that doesn’t mean that they don’t have ideas that want to be shared. So that was really important to me. There just were people who weren’t being represented, and I know that Noe saw that too. And literally anybody can comment. It’s just informal,” added Paxton.

Although the group has only had a couple of meetings, Noe believes that they are doing well. “[Class officers] are saying the same thing that the new Leadership Advisory Committee is saying; that tells me that everyone’s on the page.” The reassurance of everyone being on the same page benefits Noe. “The things that [class officers] want to improve on, everybody is looking at the same things, which is good, because then those same things get improved on.”

Moving forward, Paxton hopes that after she graduates, the committee will continue to run. “I just want to see it continue as a sounding board for students, where they can at least feel like they’re going someplace and that at least the principal is hearing what they have to say.”

She believes everybody should get a voice, no matter what your role is. “You don’t have to run for Senate or do anything special or be anybody in particular to have your voice heard at the school.”

- James Li

The *First* Robotics Team

It's 6pm on a Wednesday at the Oyster River High School (ORHS) auditorium. Inside, students type intensely on computers while tinkering with what seems to be a behemoth of a machine. While some members attend meetings with their teams, others are talking and laughing with each other as they drill wooden planks together—just another typical robotics meeting.

When you hear robotics, you might associate it with building Legos and programming them to move and use motors, like in middle school. High school robotics, however, is very different in that each robot has intricate parts that require multiple people to work together. It's also not just about building robots. Students can develop many STEM-based career pathways—which include electrical work, mechanical engineering, and programming—and can build on skills of working and communicating as a team.

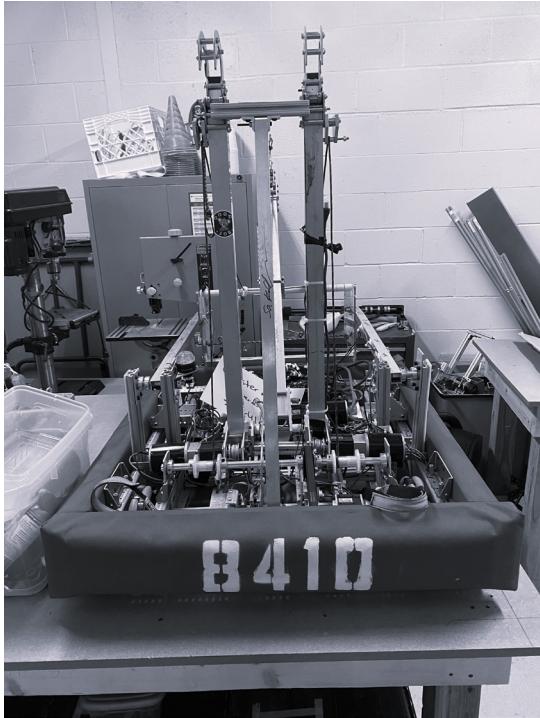
The ORHS team, Overdrive, is not just one big team working on the same thing. “We split into sub-teams: mechanical, electrical, business, strategy, and programming, and there’s leaders of those sub-teams themselves. I basically align all the sub-teams together, and I work with all the sub-team leaders to make sure their sub-team is meeting the goals they need to build a successful robot,” says Saketh Kantepudi ('24), the leader of the robotics team. He believes that each team is vital to the others and explains that the robot is a “vertically integrated system,” where if one team fails, the others will fail as well.

In addition, a mentor, someone who usually has more ex-

perience in the robotics field, is assigned to each sub-team. For example, students might not be familiar with things like



Hay (left) and Kantepudi (right) talking during a robotics meeting.



new motors or LIDAR, a radar system that tracks the positioning of the robot through laser. This then requires mentors to step in.

“What we want to do is have the students learn as much as they can about the things that they will need to be able to go ahead and design the robot. So, if we must go pick up a ball and throw a ball into a hoop somewhere as part of the game, how we do that is we need to learn about projectiles. That’s a physics thing, and not all the students have had physics. The math is parabolas. If you had Algebra 2, you could figure that one out,” says Sue Hay, the electrical team mentor.

Once the team familiarizes themselves with the robot and its components, it’s time for competition. From January to March, the team enters the “build season.” The corporation First® releases a challenge for teams around the world to build their robots, according to the challenge. Then, through March, teams will then play each other at regional, state, and international levels. The challenge is played on a basketball-sized court, where two teams of three robots compete against each other to accumulate the most points. The challenge could be anything; for example, last year, the challenge featured balls you would have to put in baskets and a monkey bar you could climb to get points.

For the past couple of years, the Overdrive team has gotten used to this competition style. “[Last year], they learned a lot about how First is actually run, how the games are run, how to make friends with the other teams and what’s important on

“The FRC team is really where you’ll get the widest scope and the most in-depth scope of any subject, such as mechanical engineering, physics, programming, and business.”

the field,” says Hay.

This year, however, the group has made a goal. Anika Pant ('25), a member of the programming team on Overdrive, says that the team hopes to make it to the Worlds, the international

part of robotics. “The FRC (First® Robotics Competition) team is really where you’ll get the widest scope and the most in-depth scope of any subject, such as mechanical engineering, physics, programming, and business,” says Kantepudi.

Kantepudi explained how during the 2021-22 season, the programming team had great success in their work. “Our programming team, just from one year of being on the team, learned everything they need to get a five on the AP Computer Science exam, by learning Java. They didn’t do any extra work. Just by programming the robot.”

Pant, who has been doing robotics since she was 7, kept with robotics for its atmosphere. “I stuck with it because it’s such a fun thing, especially because you meet such cool people and it’s an incredibly nice peer group. Everybody has similar values in the sense that it allows you to get with people who think similarly,” she says.

Chris Hawley ('24), the leader of the design team, agrees with Pant’s assessment. “You don’t have to come here just to



competition level of First.

“I think that’d be an incredible thing if we’re able to [make it to Worlds], especially being that this is basically our second year as a team... Last year was our test year. Learn from last year, apply what we know this year, add more stuff, and yeah, be better,” she says.

While getting to Worlds is a great feat any team can achieve, the skills that you gain along the way are also a big

learn how to program. You can learn how to work with others, you can learn how to be a leader, you can learn how to do all these things that you can’t really get from anywhere else.”

- James Li

Jahrie Houle

Small Business Owner & Nature Enthusiast



“Art inspired by nature” is the motto for freshman Jahrie Houle’s small business, Jahrie Ann Designs, and her products reflect just that.

Along with being a freshman at Oyster River High School (ORHS), Jahrie Houle (‘26), is a small-business owner, artist, nature enthusiast and so much more. During the Covid-19 quarantine, Houle began an Etsy business called Jahrie Ann Designs which sells items like cards, keychains, stickers, and washi tapes to name a few. It took off and was a great new way for her to combine her art skills and love for all things nature. Her most popular items are stickers with positive messages which reflect her positive personality and doodles of the hobbies she loves like hiking, climbing, and running.

Before her business started, Houle would always make cards for family and friend’s birthdays and other occasions. The business started naturally from that. “People would tell me I should sell [the cards] and so I did,” said Houle. “It was something that I started during Covid when we were at home and I needed something to do. I’ve always liked art and designing things; it all just came together,” she said.

Houle runs her business very independently. She does everything from biking to the post office to mail her products to handling all of the finances. However, she explained that she has received lots of support from family and friends. She also noted that the business “has changed quite a bit with what I’ve sold. When I first started, I was drawing cards and then I wanted to make stickers and washi tapes. It’s all been gradual changes. There hasn’t been a huge shift but definitely over time it has evolved.”

Eliza Hall (‘25) has been friends with Houle for a while through their youth group, the cross-country team, and a rock-climbing team they do together. Among the things Hall described about Houle was how “she’s really creative, hence her business.” Hall continued to explain how the business is a reflection of Houle as a person: “I think [her hobbies] influence her business. I’ve seen some stickers with carabiners, climbing helmets, and mountains so it’s kind of like outdoorsy stuff combined with a positive message [which is] kind of like her personality.”

Kelly Zhang (‘23) was a captain on the cross-country team which

is how she met Houle. Over the past season Zhang noticed how Houle is “an outdoorsy person. She likes hiking. She’s very good at running: for a freshman she’s super fast so that definitely feeds her outdoorsy athleticism.”

For Houle, the transition to high school has impacted her business a bit. She reflected on how she has a lot of things competing for her time right now, such as being a member of the varsity cross-country team, having schoolwork, and just life in general. “It can be hard to consistently focus on [the business.] I haven’t been posting or making new things [as much] so I’m hoping that soon things will settle down and I’ll be able to focus on it more,” she said.

Houle draws most of her stickers by hand then fixes them up digitally. From there, she prints them on sticker paper and adds contact paper over top to make them waterproof.

One of her favorite parts of the business is “being able to ship everything out and know that people across the country can buy something that I made.” As of the end of 2021, people had purchased from 10 different states including California and Washington, and currently Houle has made upwards of 100 sales with 65 five-star reviews on her Etsy site.

Houle uses Instagram to promote her business by posting designs, updates, and new products. At first glance you’ll see shades of green, nature scenes, and doodles made by Houle across her feed. Grace Kasper (‘25) doesn’t know Houle personally but is a follower and found her business on Instagram. Kasper shared that she follows Houle for her cute designs but also said, “I just love that she is a woman running a small business. I think it’s so cool that there’s

people like her in our school who are able to do that and she’s getting support.”

Zhang also discovered Houle’s business on Instagram after getting to know her through cross-country. “I didn’t know that artsy side of her and it definitely aligns with her nature loving, kind, positive personality,” said Zhang.

As far as the future of Jahrie Ann Designs goes, “I hope that it is a thing I can enjoy for a while and I would love for it to keep going so I can keep making things,” Houle said. Be sure to check out both her Instagram, @jahrieanndesigns, and her Etsy shop, jahrieanndesigns.etsy.com.

- Libby Davidson

Images courtesy of Jahrie Houle

The DoorDash Dilemma

Let's go back to June of 2020. It was an early Saturday morning, and I had just woken up. I was immediately on edge as my day had started with a robbery--one with my own father as the culprit. "Give me your debit card," he said. His words were striking and loud. His voice filled my room as I lifted my head from my pillow in shock.

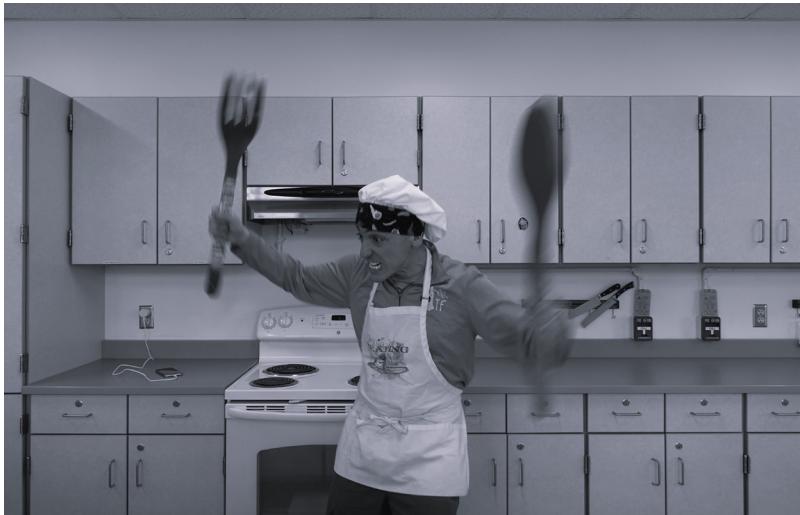
However, this isn't what you might think, and I wasn't a victim in any way. If anybody, or anything, was victimized in this scenario, it was my poor bank account which had been drained about \$300 down the money-sucking pit that is DoorDash (an app you can download onto your phone to order food straight to your door). Quarantine had me exiled to my bedroom, I nearly refused to cook for myself, and having food delivered through DoorDash was convenient. Almost three years later, I still struggle to properly budget my money when it comes to food and eating out. To be honest with you, I probably spend about \$100 a month on food.

But why? I have a basic understanding of how to cook, my dad keeps our kitchen very well stocked, he cooks for us, and I definitely know it's not sustainable to purchase food for every meal. It comes down to convenience, as it does for a lot of my peers as well. As a senior, I know this won't stay convenient for long, and I'll have to learn how to cook at some point. However, getting my driver's license, a car, and a job has set me back from the craft that is cooking and thrown me full force into near debt as a teenager. I never used to spend as much money on food as I did this year – freshman year DoorDash incident aside – which tells me this is an issue within upperclassmen that emerges with freedom

and independence.

This year I'm taking Introduction to Culinary Arts as well as Bake Shop. After the first quarter, I can confidently say that my skills in the kitchen have improved, and I spend less money on food after realizing how easy cooking is. It took a little bit of cooking and baking to recognize that spending the money on food isn't much more convenient and isn't nearly as rewarding. So why do my peers and I continue to spend such exorbitant amounts of money on food?

I decided to talk to Nick Ricciardi, the Culinary Arts and Bake Shop teacher at Oyster River High School (ORHS) about students' abilities in class. If people aren't cooking at home, and are instead spending their money on take-out food, I thought that might be because they aren't sure how to cook food they really like. "I would say that about 30% of my kids have no idea what they're doing,"



Ricciardi said. But you can't be clueless in the kitchen forever. "It's important to learn how to cook because it's healthier and cheaper," Ricciardi said.

Like I said, at ORHS, you can take Introduction to Culinary Arts and Bake Shop with Ricciardi, where he said that he sees students become more comfortable with using ingredients and being in a kitchen in general. "I think ultimately the students who really sink their teeth in, take charge, and put in effort get not only a much better experience but they get a lot better at cooking and at being able to cook on their own," Ricciardi said. "Kids will start to say that they made the recipe at home for their families or other people, and that's really what the goal is," he added.

But sometimes even while in one of Ricciardi's classes,

students will still buy food, although they are building skills in the kitchen. "I probably spend about \$30 a week on DoorDash," said Bake Shop student Gavin Weingart ('23). While this may not seem like much, after just four weeks (or one month), that's \$120 spent on overpriced mediocre delivery food. I know I can't say much considering my pricey history with DoorDash, but I think that makes me all the more qualified to harbor any opinion I wish. "I'm just too lazy to really learn how to cook," he added. Hearing this, my ideas changed. Perhaps cooking seems boring to most teenagers, as there is much more satisfaction in just being handed something.

I realized I needed to speak more with students my age to get a gauge of how severe the problem of buying food is. Emily Macpherson ('23) talked about the satisfaction piece of being able to eat food and not having to cook. "I mostly get food right after school when I'm

food becomes habitual, or almost built into your schedule. "When I'm on a break [from work] I'll usually go to Chipotle and I'll spend anywhere from \$12-\$15," Bailey Barth-Malone ('23) said. Assuming Barth-Malone works two days a week, that's ANOTHER \$120 on food monthly. But what else are they going to do? They're on break at work! It's convenient to go buy food!

But is it really all about convenience and laziness? Or is it something about the food that students are buying that's just irresistible? Because you could totally pack a lunch or bring a snack to hold you over. In a small poll I took of 22 Oyster River Students, six of them said Hop 'n Grind was one of their favorite places to eat locally. As a devoted Hop 'n Grind regular, I understand these results. The food has flavor and savoriness that you just can't find at other restaurants in Durham, and for how satisfying the food is, it's a great price. When I looked

"It's important to learn how to cook because it's healthier and cheaper."

most hungry and I know it's going to satisfy me, rather than going home to just eat ramen," she said. But again, bringing back the math, if you get food three days a week after school, spending around \$10 each time, by the end of the month you've spent \$120, and by the end of the year, you've spent \$1,440.

Other students like Dillon Crockett ('23) have become fed up with seeing how much they spend on food. Crockett budgets his money when it comes to purchases like food. "I try not to spend over \$20 a week," Crockett said. "I get fast food, and I keep my purchases small. Usually just a \$1 sandwich but it still adds up," he added. Fast food isn't always cheap, especially if you get it multiple times a week. Crockett said, "I recently realized that I had been buying food almost every day. I started limiting myself a bit." And while we all should take some tips from Crockett, it's not that easy to set the boundary within yourself to not spend money.

This is because of what I mentioned previously, how for some people eating out is more about convenience, and less about the money, and I totally get that. It's not the end of the world when you don't have time or energy to cook, or maybe there's nothing at your house that you can cook. But the problem starts when buying

at the menu, I saw that the cheapest meal is for \$6, and is a plain cheeseburger with french fries. Personally, I'd consider that a good deal on real food from a local restaurant when you consider the prices of meals from fast food chains.

But again, how does that add up? Three \$6 sandwiches a week is \$18, in a month that's \$72, and in a year that's \$864. So, is there ever really a good deal on food from restaurants? Well, kind of. The convenience definitely pays for the meal sometimes, but as high schoolers we don't have the money to pay convenience fees like that. There's an important life lesson when it comes to buying food and spending money on food, as it is clearly not sustainable to spend \$800 a month on food on top of groceries. The most sustainable way to live is to buy groceries and learn how to cook, though it's not always the most obvious way.

When there's food you just can't help but crave, my advice to you is to learn how to cook that food! Not only will you save money, but you'll have fun doing so!

-Ava Gruner

The Real Rachael



As soon as I sat down with Rachael Blansett, she led with her identities: black, biracial, queer, femme; declaring who she is before anyone else could define her.

Rachael Blansett is the new Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) Coordinator for the Oyster River Cooperative School District (ORCSD). As the DEIJ coordinator, she works with teachers, students, and administrators to better incorporate DEIJ into the Oyster River community (to learn more about the DEIJ position, read Zoe Selig's article, *Rachael Blansett Confirmed as the ORCSD's First DEIJ Coordinator*). Who she is has played a huge role in her life, influencing her career, personal values, and experiences.

While those identities come naturally to Blansett now, she endured many life experiences to find the right words to describe who she is.

Blansett attended Grand Valley State University as a first-generation college student from a low-income family but struggled to thrive mentally and emotionally in a college setting, feeling as though she didn't fit in with the other students. Finding those who she could relate to was a significant part of feeling more integrated into her college experience.

She was able to get in touch with her school's LGBTQ+ resource center on campus, which helped her put words and descriptions to her identity. "I was finally gaining language to name and shape the experiences that I had felt my

entire life, but I just didn't have the words or the knowledge to talk about...it was through that community I had built that I learned more about myself. I learned more about the other folks around me and also about the world," said Blansett. From this point in her life, she started focusing on leadership and activism, leading her to where she is today.

As I talked with Blansett, community and relationships came up time and time again. It became clear how important those personal connections are to her, which is an essential aspect of both her personal and professional life.

"Personally, I value relationships, particularly my friendships, because that's my family. I'm not really that connected with my own family, for a multitude of reasons...and from that I had to bridge my own friendships, my own community, and my own relationships [to create] my [chosen] family."

A significant relationship in Blansett's life is her partner of two years, Kevin Pajaro-Mariñez, who is the Assistant Director of Equity and Inclusion at Phillips Exeter Academy. During my interview with Pajaro-Mariñez, it was apparent how admirable he finds Blansett to be, emphasizing her character and ability to show compassion to many.

"Rachael is someone who's very patient, super kind, and incredibly understanding even when the conditions for that don't always lend themselves to it. She's able to find the kindness for people in most situations where harm has occurred and talk it through with them [when appropriate]

instead of just dropping them," said Pajaro-Mariñez.

Aside from the more serious aspects of Blansett's life, she has a lot of fun interests, sharing many of them with those she loves.

"We love watching trash TV, [especially] reality dating shows. Love Island UK is our jam," said Pajaro-Mariñez. "We love to watch people go through their ridiculous dating shenanigans together, and it's nice to spend that time together, getting to settle down and chill." Blansett was also very passionate about Love Island during our interview, as she loves the drama and simple entertainment factor which it brings.

Another huge interest of Blansett's is Karaoke. While she feels that "every day is karaoke day" and you can almost always catch Blansett singing, her go-to songs for a traditional karaoke setting are "1, 2 Step" by Ciara and "If I Ain't Got You" by Alicia Keys.



While these interests may not be what you initially assume based on Blansett's more introverted and calm presence, it's a part of Blansett that Pajaro-Mariñez loves most. "On the surface, most people would never know that she actually has a goofy energy towards her. A lot of people don't always have access to that because I think most people, when they see Rachael, automatically jump to things related to work, but I think underneath that, she has a lot of different quirks and energy, even though she's more reserved. It's really special when she gives you access to that [side of herself]," he said.

Blansett's calm and patient personality traits can be translated into her position at Oyster River. Those who have had the opportunity to work alongside Blansett have unanimously found that she is a very personable and relaxed individual.

Maya Ajit ('23), a member of the DEIJ club who helped hire Blansett, feels very comfortable around her. "She's very

welcoming and open minded...she really values what students think as well. It's nice because [ORHS] puts so much importance on [student opinion]."

Along with Ajit, there are multiple staff members throughout the district who feel the same.

"She's very authentic," said Vivian Jablonski, an Oyster River High School (ORHS) teacher, who is the advisor of the DEIJ club and also helped hire Blansett. "If you ask her a question and she's not sure [of the answer], she's going to be the first one to say, 'I don't know, I'll look into it for you.' She has tons of resources and she's clearly very knowledgeable in the area of providing support for people in education."

Val Wolfson, a teacher at Oyster River Middle School who works closely with Blansett, emphasized Blansett's calming presence. "She's delightfully low-key. She is an amazing listener, and you know that she's listening because she's able to synthesize what she's heard. She asked really great questions [which] reflects [that] she's a very present person."

These traits of Blansett's translate into her work with the greater ORCSD community. Paige Burt ('23), a student and member of the DEIJ club said, "She's very open to people who are not necessarily caught up on all of the latest terms and everything that has to do with DEIJ...I think is a really important quality for this type of person to have because when we get so caught up in being progressive and being woke, we can end up isolating the people that don't know everything."

Blansett wanted to make it very clear what her mission is while in this position in ORCSD, as there has been controversy from the outside community surrounding the DEIJ position, as well as Blansett's fit for the role.

"I want to emphasize that I support all students in all their identities and experiences. Throughout my entire career I have built cross cultural dialogue spaces, have held spaces for learning across difference, whether that's different identities, different conflict styles, different professional working styles, et cetera. We all have different identities that are meaningful to us and really shape and frame our experiences within the world. If I can be a resource of support for that, that is what I'm for."

One thing which has become very clear is that there was never any hesitation from the district as to whether Blansett was right for the job.

"The debate on who should be hired really wasn't a debate," said Jim Morse, ORCSD's Superintendent. "[Blansett] was clearly the number one candidate, and I think it was largely due to her experiences in this field, at the collegiate level, but also her ability to articulate the work. She answered the questions that the interview committee had extremely well, and she is highly qualified. I'm glad to have her on board."

Blansett is hoping to continue connecting her personal self with her work in ORCSD. "I'm excited to meet with more student groups, build relationships, and continuously reintroduce myself to the community, allowing myself to be an accessible resource to [everyone]."

- Sarah Laliberte
Images courtesy of Rachael Blansett



NICOLOSI.

A young Mike Nicolosi spent more time running from the cops than wanting to be one.

Nicolosi, known to students as Officer Mike, is the Student Resource Officer (SRO) for the Oyster River Cooperative School District. He splits his time between the middle and high schools as a frequent face in the hallways and a resource for students and staff. Personally, I got to know him as the crossing guard who prevents me from getting run over on my walk home from school. Nicolosi always struck me as a calm and kind personality, greeting students in the hallway and having fun with us at school events. When I asked to interview him, I assumed that he had always wanted to be a police officer—the job seemed made for him. I was surprised to discover that this wasn't always his plan.

A proud native of Haverhill, Massachusetts, Nicolosi grew up with two social worker parents, a younger brother, and the goal of opening his own private therapy practice. He attended Springfield College for a bachelor's degree in psychology with minors in philosophy and criminal justice. But, Nicolosi clarified, he chose a criminal justice minor because "I really wanted to learn how to protect myself if I had to deal with the cops," not with the goal of becoming one.

In fact, "I never wanted to be a cop," Nicolosi said. "If you ask anyone in my previous lives, never, not once have I ever said yeah, I'm actually considering this."

His stance on this began to change a few years after he graduated from college. Nicolosi's parents told him that before he went to graduate school, he needed to decide what aspect of psychology he would specialize in. So, he decided to take a summer job while he considered it. He ended up scuba diving for golf balls for about two years and tried out bartending.

During this time, Nicolosi asked a lot of questions of himself about how he envisioned his life. "I didn't want that typical nine to five job," he realized. "I wanted something where I could drive a lot. I wanted something where I didn't have a boss who was always breathing down my neck, where I could have my own power to do what I wanted to do."

He started considering law enforcement, but the biggest motivator came when his sister-in-law died of a heroin overdose. "When we requested assistance from the police, they stereotyped her and threatened to lock her in jail. Overall, there was a lack of knowledge, resources, and empathy. Their approach could have been different, and maybe there would have been a better outcome. It's my goal to listen to what people need and understand the reasons behind their actions. We all make mistakes in life, but I feel like it is important to focus on helping others."

"I wanted to be a cop to help better people and be for the people," said Nicolosi. He doesn't want to be "the power hungry [officer] that you've seen in TV shows that are like,

'alright, I'm gonna go catch the bad guy.' I mean, being a cop, you can go and do that. But what about the effect that you have on people? What do they need? How can I go about helping them in those ways?"

The passion with which Nicolosi spoke about his decision to become a police officer stunned me. It was clear to me that he truly seeks to work with and improve people's situations, not to blindly punish them. I also appreciated that he can understand first-hand the struggles that many students might go through because between that and his psychology background, he seems extremely well-suited to support students however they need.

Just as Nicolosi didn't intend to become a police officer, he also didn't anticipate becoming an SRO. But when the position opened up, nobody at the police department was interested. "I didn't want you guys to have somebody that was going to be lackluster at their job and not want to be here for you guys," said Nicolosi. "I wanted you guys to have that opportunity to have someone that was fun," so Nicolosi volunteered.

This decision did not come without sacrifice. Because an SRO has fewer opportunities for overtime, taking the position came with a significant pay cut. When Nicolosi mentioned this casually in our interview, it wasn't to brag, and he didn't seem to view it as particularly notable. I was blown away. This small fact showed me the amount of care and passion Nicolosi has for his job and his students. He's not in our school for any self-serving interests; he's truly here to make a difference for the students who need him.

The job of making a difference in students' lives isn't easy. In addition to working on patrol outside of school hours, there are many aspects of being an SRO. "My job is like being an informal counselor, a mentor, and a cop all at the same time. Every day is a different day," Nicolosi explained.

Nicolosi says he uses his psychology background in his job daily, whether he's dealing with neighbors' disputes or students' behavior. "A lot of my job is having the ability to listen actively and know what that person is needing," he said.

One of Nicolosi's biggest priorities is making sure students feel safe. This involves leading

active shooter trainings for teachers, ensuring all security measures are working smoothly, and strategically addressing any threats to safety that come up. "I'm always trying to find different ways to improve or to make your guys' life better," he said.

Another significant part of Nicolosi's job is, of course, working with students. Because Nicolosi works with both the middle and high school, he is responsible for helping about 1600 kids, whether they need assistance with a speeding ticket, a solution to a difficult home situation, or just a person to talk to.

Building relationships with students is essential to his job, but it can be tricky with that many students. Additionally, with so many stereotypes about police officers, some students have found it difficult to trust him. "When I first took this job, I always asked students why they thought I was here and what being a school resource officer means to them. Everybody kind of thought it was like a fancy hall monitor that would arrest everybody," Nicolosi said. "It took me a long time to make it clear that that's not my role."

At the middle school, he has discovered that the easiest way to make connections with students is "to just hang out with them." He is a frequent face at ORMS recess, playing games like foursquare with students to make sure they know he's a safe person to go to.

At the high school, "I fought really hard for relationships," said Nicolosi. We don't have recess, so to make those connections, "I really try to insert myself in everything that I can." He frequents gym classes, Celeste Best's forensics class, and even athletic games to cheer on Oyster River students.

"I just try to be everywhere that I can and open that invitation to say hi," Nicolosi said.

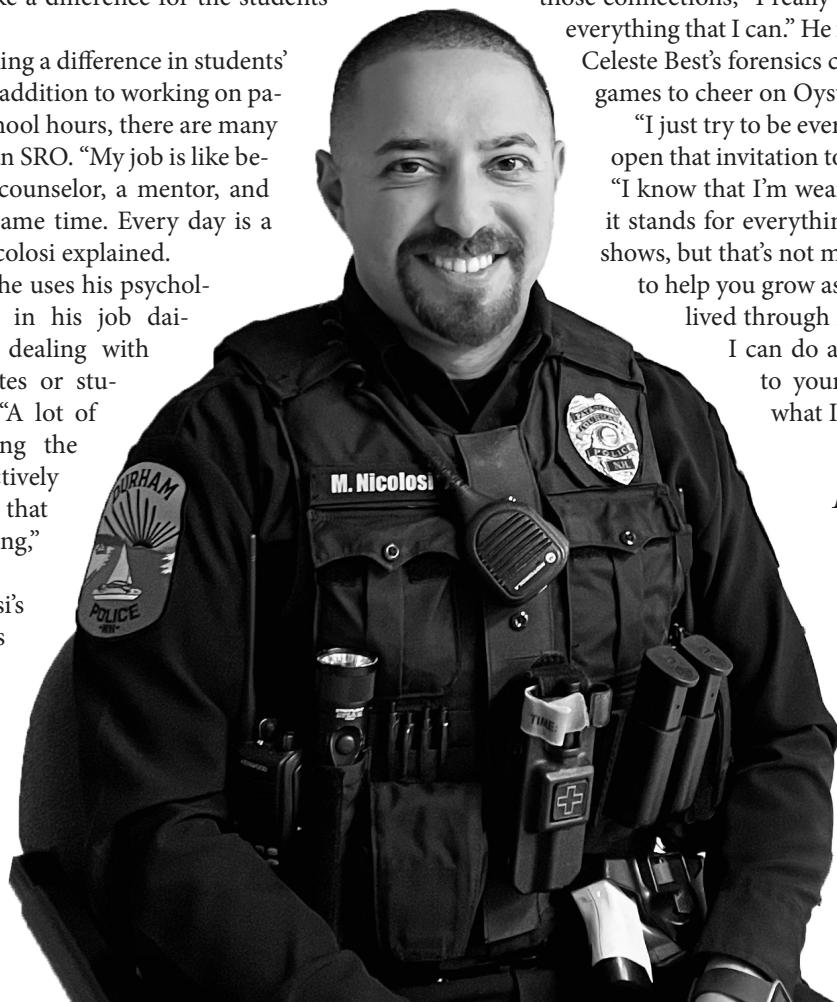
"I know that I'm wearing this uniform and it stands for everything bad that the media shows, but that's not my role. My role here is

to help you grow as a person. I've kind of lived through it and done it all, so if

I can do anything to contribute to your life positively, that's what I'm here for."

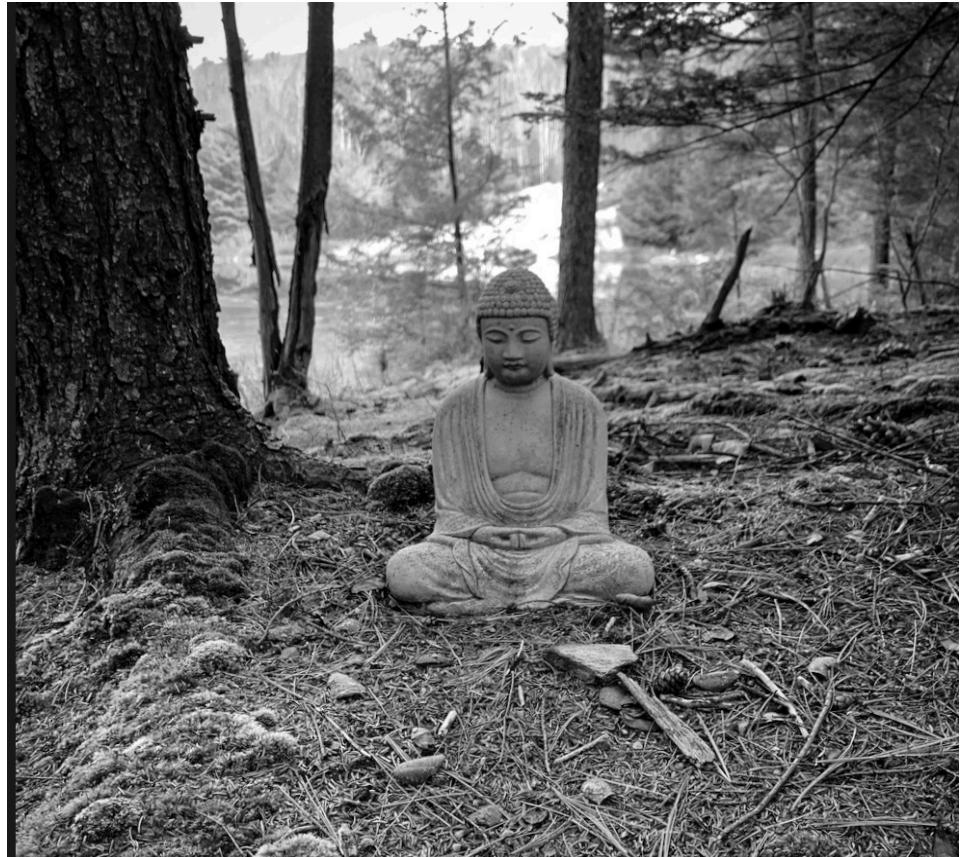
- Zoe Selig

*Images courtesy of
Mike Nicolosi*



Our Morning at Morning Sun

As students who practice yoga pretty regularly, we decided to spend our weekends throughout November exploring the yoga and mindfulness practices available to us across New Hampshire. The following two articles are part of a four-part series in which we reflect on our experiences at each place. The other sections of this series, along with these ones, can be found on mor.news.



I discovered the Morning Sun Mindfulness Center located in Alstead, NH after searching the depths of Google. Upon seeing they offered Days of Mindfulness open to all “friends,” I decided to sign Grace and me up without doing any further research. The website said it was free, and as a broke 17-year-old, that alone was enough to convince me it was a good idea.

When I informed my parents of our plan, my mom was apprehensive at first, but later approved when she explained that, logically, she would rather I join a cult while I’m still in high school to “avoid wasting money on college tuition.”

So, on a drizzly November morning at 7:30, Grace pulled into my driveway so we could arrive at Morning Sun by 9. On the drive there, I was struggling to envision what it would look like and was hoping I could let go of any skepticism I had surrounding, in the words of Morning Sun’s webpage, “the power of meditation.” Although I’ve tried meditating in the past and have even downloaded some guided med-

itation apps, I always lose interest when I feel like meditation’s “not working.” I was hopeful that Morning Sun would change my mind.

When we first turned onto Rose Apple Lane, the only indication of any sort of destination at the end was a handmade wooden sign engraved with the words Morning Sun Community. As we drove further along the dirt path that seemingly led nowhere, we encountered a dismal-looking lake to our left, which we later discovered, through a disproportionate map hand-drawn by community members, is called Blueberry Pond. By the time we approached the end of the road and saw the row of empty parking spaces, we quickly realized we were the first of the “friends” to arrive, an observation that only furthered our impulse to flee.

“Well, it’s too late to turn back now!” I said half-jokingly, half my-mom-might-have-had-a-point-about-the-cult. By the agitated expression on her face, I could tell Grace didn’t find my annoyingly optimistic commentary as amusing as I did.

Grace and I followed a group of people who seemed to know where they were going past the gardens, filled with straw and decaying tomato plants, and through the woods where the Meditation Hall stood. Before our group meditation leader arrived, we spoke with a woman named Kerry, who had traveled all the way from New York to attend the four-hour Day of Mindfulness.

She told us her friend recommended the community to her and explained that there aren't many communities like Morning Sun in her area that allow for such "a close connection to nature and Thay."

Up until that point, neither Grace nor I had ever heard of Thích Nhât Hạnh (Thay) or any of the other things Kerry mentioned that we nodded along to and pretended to understand. So, when our leader arrived and invited people to follow him into the hut, we stayed behind as I frantically pulled out my phone to decipher what she was talking about.

That was the moment we found out that this wasn't just a day of meditation. Unknowingly, I had signed us up for a Buddhist retreat.

When Grace and I finally opened the door to the Meditation Hall, we acknowledged we were no longer only looking for the opportunity to learn how to effectively meditate; we were now searching for meaning in a religion that was completely foreign to us.

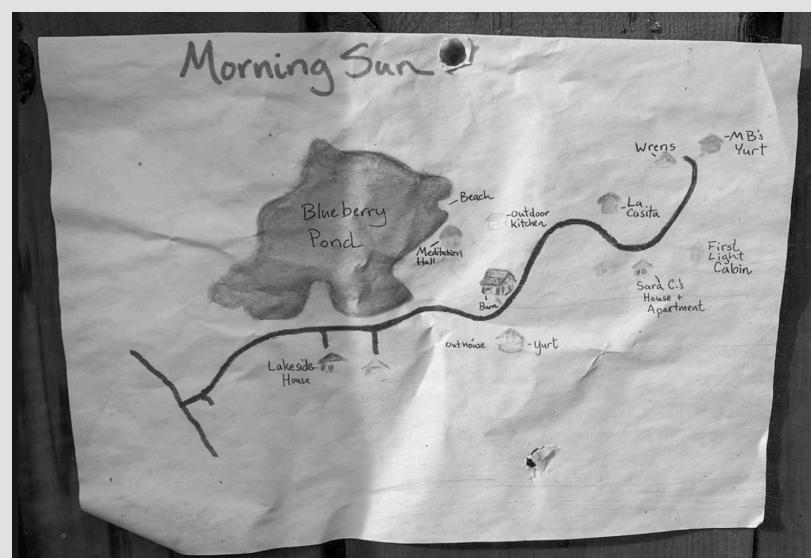
The Meditation Hall was more spacious than I expected. Natural light filtered through its arched windows, cooled by the morning's overcast. Grace and I apprehensively took seats on meditation cushions at the back of the room by the wood stove, which were adjacent to the Buddhist shrine at the front: a table adorned with framed pictures of Thay and needlepoint mantras about "dwelling in the present moment."

There were about 30 people, most of them middle-aged or older, crammed inside the 12-foot-wide hut by the time our leader, Honey Bear, banged the sound bowl to signal the start of our meditation period.

Honey Bear was a mysterious man. At first glance, he looked like a veteran Bud



Grace encountering the blue barn during our initial exploration of the Morning Sun community.



Map of Morning Sun drawn by the Community members

dhist with his brown Wushu pants. However, his black suspenders (which I later learned are his wardrobe staple) and long-sleeved button-up that rested taut on his thick-set frame suggested he had recently been spat out of the corporate world. His hair, which was sparse on top, was slicked back into a braid that trailed down his back.

9:45 AM

After name sharing, Honey Bear told us we would be starting the morning with a “quick” 30-minute meditation. I glanced over at Grace, who confessed in the car that she had trouble sitting still for more than ten minutes, to catch her reaction. To my surprise, the frown that surfaced on her face upon arrival was starting to turn up at the corners, and we gave each other a mutual nod as if to say, “Alright, here we go.”

The first session of meditation felt long and awkward. For a few minutes, I would allow myself to forget where I was; I would be transported into an alternate universe, where the only thing that mattered was the steady pattern of my breath. However, whenever someone coughed or the fire from the wood stove crackled, I was yanked out of this world and reminded that mine still existed: one fraught with physics tests, 50 pages of unread French, and all the other stresses that seem to pile up junior year.

So, when Honey Bear finally struck the sound bowl finally after what felt like hours, a wave of disappointment rushed over me. At that moment, I convinced myself that meditation was definitely not for me.

10:45 AM

When we reentered the Meditation Hall, bowed to Thay, and sat back down on the same orange zafus we had at the start of the morning, I was unsure what more there was to do. We had already meditated for almost an hour, touched our bare feet to the earth, and shot our intentions up to the heavens.

Before I could finish my thought, Honey Bear emerged in the door frame with a book of Buddhist scriptures in his right hand and an expandable toy sphere in his left. Our eyes gravitated toward him as he

walked, extending his arms outward with the same force that Moses used to part the sea, toward his meditation cushion at the center of the circle.

“My friends, the time has come to Dharma share,” Honey Bear said with a little smile, shifting around on his cushion to get comfortable.

Grace and I were not smiling.

“For those of you who have never Dharma shared, we will pass this toy around the circle and, when you receive the toy, you have however long you want to share whatever’s on your mind. Of course, you

“I was so overcome with everybody’s love and acceptance. I realized that I mattered in that moment. Sharing taught me that my healing process is valid.”

don’t have to. The rest of us are only here to listen, not judge,” he told us, reminding us also to bow in and out before speaking to Thay.

I watched anxiously as the ball came closer to me and tried to piece together what I was going to say to strangers. While the topics of the group’s shares ranged from increased polarization in American politics, to raking pathways, to fears of aging, to everything in between, all of them were shockingly raw and honest.

For me, the most memorable share came from a middle-aged woman who, at first, became so overwhelmed with emotion that she needed to leave the hut, and then returned to inform the group that her mother was dying. As she sat there crying in front of us, describing how unbearably painful it is to be powerless as the person you love most awaits death, I started to understand the ways that Dharma sharing can help people. The group wasn’t there to assure her it was going to be okay, to console her, or to offer her advice; we were just supposed to listen.

When the ball finally got into Grace’s hands, I expected her to immediately pass it over to me, but, instead, she held on to it tight and bowed in. As she was sharing, I could see tears start to well up in her eyes as her thoughts, which initially sounded scripted, became more honest.

So, when she bowed out, I forced myself to share, too. When Grace finally passed the ball to me, I found myself staring blankly at a group of people who were all waiting for me to say something, praying I wouldn’t sound like an idiot by fumbling my words. Now, I can’t even remember what I shared, but I do remember how liberating it felt to be able to speak the truth and know that people were actually listening to me, not just pretending to.

“Listening with the intent to listen, not judge, felt so powerful for all of us,” Sarah Henry, resident at Morning Sun, said, explaining how her first experience with Dharma sharing was similar to mine and Grace’s. “When it was my turn to share, I felt awkward and thought I didn’t have anything important to say. [...] But, when I took the leap, opened my mouth, and just started talking, I was so overcome with everybody’s love and acceptance. I realized that I mattered in that moment. Sharing taught me that my healing process is valid.”

- Abby Owens

You can find the rest of this article on mor.news



Gettin' Down With the Goats

"Abby, I am leaving this towel right here—it is NOT coming home with me," I said, openly displaying my abhorrence at the pile of goat feces and urine, blanketing what had been my freshly-laundered beach towel not fifty minutes before.

All that was running through my mind was how Abby had roped me into this whole journey through different yoga practices, which was why I was in a room surrounded by 31 enthusiastic others—26 of them being goats. Our search for some of the most interesting yoga experiences offered in New Hampshire took us twenty minutes south of Durham to Legacy Lane Farm, located in Stratham, NH. Facebook awards a superb five-star average—the reviews mostly written by parents of six-year-old children who begged for their birthday parties to be held at the farm. Abby and I were not hosting a birthday party, visiting the petting zoo, or perusing the gift shop, but rather attending a yoga class featuring the goats from the farm.

After pulling into the parking lot on a chilly, drizzly, overcast day, Abby

and I meandered our way into the front entrance of what we assumed to be the studio. We opted to leave our yoga mats at home for this experience and instead armed ourselves with towels, as we were told that the goats would try to eat our mats. Little did we know, they'd also leave us some not-so-sanitary presents on our "mats."

The front entrance was filled with various goat paraphernalia, including scented soaps and lotions, as well as many items falling into the home décor and gift realms. We ventured deeper into the building and reached what appeared to be the studio, yet not in a traditional sense. That is to say, not filled with the typical aromas of essential oil or the sweltering warmth of other studios we've visited.

A smiling face greeted us by the entrance into the goat yoga room: Jessica Lescrinier, an English teacher, certified yoga instructor, and our guide throughout the transformative next hour of our lives. Lescrinier started instructing goat yoga at Legacy Lane at the beginning of 2022; the combination of a background in horse training, teaching, and

yoga formed a natural pathway to her passion for goat yoga. My initial hesitations were somewhat relieved by the calmness and positive energy that radiated off Lescrinier.

After setting up our towels in a corner of the room smelling distinctly of *farm*, Abby and I took off our jewelry and stashed our valuables (or what we didn't want to be touched by any searching goat mouths) into the adjoining room, which was filled with bunnies. I wrung my hands in anticipation, completely unaware of what was about to enter the French doors to my left.

I glanced at Abby, standing beside me, looking calm and collected. Typical. I gave her a wide-eyed stare and mouthed *what are we doing here?!* as I unnecessarily smoothed my towel and shifted my weight from side to side.

We got the quick rundown from Lescrinier and the other employees helping out, which prepared us for some challenges we might face when the goats were brought in. We were told that while none of the goats would harm us, some of them, especially the older ones, could be very clingy. Mostly, we



just had to be cautious of the goats trying to munch our hair or fingers, and we'd be fine. However, nothing could truly prepare us for when dozens of rambunctious farm animals charged into the room.

Baaaaaaa vibrated between the four walls, as we were immediately surrounded by goats of all colors and sizes. Some had horns sticking out of their heads, others had the most fascinating eye colors, and there even appeared to be younglings, which we were later informed were dwarf goats.

The majority of the class was time for us, as participants, to interact with the animals. We started off by sitting on our mats, trying to reach for and pet as many goats as we could. They were all quite cute (objectively speaking, of course). Abby quickly fell in love with a small goat called Wee Wee, a friendly and uncontrollable fellow who trotted around the room, garnering the love and attention of many of the other participants.

Goats were everywhere at that point. I spotted a large one that could barely fit

on the chair it had mounted and another on a countertop, attempting and failing to eat my water bottle. Others would wander over to us, trying to get our attention by getting close enough to touch, and then run away to someone else. Abby and I shared many laughs, especially when the first goat "relieved itself." Those

Baaaaaaa vibrated between the four walls, as we were immediately surrounded by goats of all colors and sizes.

giggles continued as the goats let it loose in the areas of our other participants.

However, the laughs quickly halted as we became the victims of the next attack. Our towels were destroyed, and so was my mood.

When we had tired ourselves of petting as many goats as we could, Lescrinier led

us in some simple poses—nothing too difficult, even for the non-experienced.

Keeping a watchful eye out for any aggressive four-legged participants, I centered myself, standing in Mountain pose, and then folded down into the beginning of a sequence called Sun Salutation. As I made my way into Cobra—laying on my belly with my upper body curved upward—Wee Wee made his way over to our area. I couldn't help but snort as he nudged his way over to Abby, taking up half of the towel while staring up at her with those large icicle-blue eyes.

Our yoga practice ended with a series of balances: Dancer, Tree, and Crow. The grand finale: a tabletop position, goat perched nervously on our backs. This one required a partner to help place the animal carefully on our level backs. I let Abby master this one, as I was scared that the entire time she held the pose that the goat would tumble off—or worse, poop.

While all I wanted to do in those final moments of our first goat yoga experience was to go home and shower off all



the farm smells that seemed to be radiating out of my every pore, I powered through the final moments. Coupled with those emotions and fueled by the over-stimulation of being in a room with loud animals, I was beginning to feel drained. Yet I was amazed at how happy and calm Lescrinier appeared as she wrapped the class up.

“Everyone’s so happy; no one leaves goat leaves goat yoga without a massive smile on their face.”

Her demeanor was just one of the factors that led me to have the utmost respect for Lescrinier in her “niche line of work.” Her skill set is quite developed to be able to lead the class with always a smile on her face. I was overly impressed with Lescrinier’s ability to demonstrate the yoga sequences, spot any ‘clean-up’ areas, be comfortable with redirecting the goats, and calmly encourage the participants to grow out of their comfort zones. Her love for animals and patience with both them and the crowd was evident in just the short time I spent with her. Honestly, I don’t know if I could’ve made it through the session without her guidance.

Despite some of my struggles with the whole poop thing, I completely understand why goat yoga can be extremely beneficial for many people. It works not only as a therapeutic experience for those who enjoy the company of animals but also for folks who want a low-stakes introduction to the practice of yoga.

Lescrinier says that “it’s really intimidating to a lot of people to even try going to a class or a studio. Coming to goat yoga is really low pressure. And you’re able to explore yoga while also doing something a little silly. So, pressure’s off.”

Everyone’s experience with goat yoga is going to be different, but I would recommend it for someone who is comfortable with animals and wants a gentle, low-key way to practice some basic yoga. And, of course, it’s certainly a good laugh!

And while Lescrinier says that the classes are “definitely chaotic, and no two [...] are the same,” she notices the same sentiment that I came to feel. “Everyone’s so happy; no one leaves goat yoga without a massive smile on their face. [...] It’s very therapeutic, and whether you do the yoga or not, everyone just loves being around animals.”

If nothing else, you’ll certainly be entertained if you take a goat yoga class at Legacy Lane, and I have to give a shout-out to the employees who were cleaning up the messes made by the goats—I really do appreciate their dedication.

The biggest resonating factor of this experience was the happiness that so many folks seemed to share. Abby, our classmates, and the workers all seemed to wear an infectious grin throughout the class, brought on by the stars of the show: the goats.

- Grace Webb



Unified Sports

All good things must come to an end. For my senior year, that very special thing was the end of my Unified sports career.

Unified sports have been around for a while, but recently, more and more people have been joining the team. With being runners-up in 2020 and 2022 in soccer, and both volleyball and soccer champions in 2021, the members of this Co-Ed team have certainly proven the strength of the Oyster River Unified program. As someone who has played Unified sports for three years, I wanted to talk about how it feels to be with my team. I will never forget the rush of the games, the fun of the practices, and the strong connections I have built that I hope last a lifetime.

I remember hearing about Unified sports because a couple of my friends had signed up to play on the soccer team in the fall of my sophomore year. With the fresh scent of COVID still in the air and school being online, I figured this would be a good way to see my friends and get back out there a little more. While I didn't know exactly what to expect, I had known that Unified was a team consisting of some athletes who have IEPs, which are independent learning plans as independent and partners who get to help and be a part of the team as well. See Abby Schmitt's article, Unified Sports, to hear more about what the Unified program is.

When I started, I had almost no experience. I had played soccer when I was 8, but other than that, nothing. I was nervous. I had no idea what to expect and thought that maybe I'd be cut as a partner because I had no experience, and I didn't want to let my team down. Turns out I was wrong.

When I went to the first practice, I was surprised to see that not a lot of people had actual soccer experience, something that made me feel so much more comfortable. This meant that a lot of us were going to learn together and that felt great.

Since my 2020 season was my sophomore year, the memories of everything are a little hazy, but that doesn't mean I still don't remember the big take aways. I remember gaining a lot of good soccer experience and making a lot of friends. I remember learning that I had a lot in common with many people I had never met and that was wonderful to learn.

Megan Moody ('23) also played Unified soccer with me my sophomore year and was actually one of the people who convinced me to play. When I asked her about her favorite memory from the sophomore year season, she brought up a story I hadn't thought of in a while.

"I remember the game we played at Epping High School. It was a playoff game and it had started to snow. It was so cold, so the team all huddled in the shed. Our parents had brought a ton of blankets for us, and we all talked and tried to stay warm. It was worth it in the end when we won, though."

We played so well as a team that we made it to the NHIAA championship for the first time in Oyster River Unified sports history. In the end, we ended up being runners-up to Dover High School. This was disappointing, but it meant one thing to me: I have to come



back next year for a win.

Winter came and that meant the start of Unified basketball. While this was one Unified sport I didn't play, this was the beginning of Mitchell Warden's ('23) Unified career. Warden had played golf previously in the fall but decided he "wanted to try something new...and I enjoyed it." While unfortunately the basketball team didn't make it to championships that winter, volleyball was quick to come in the spring.

I decided to join Unified volleyball that spring, not only because I had prior experience, but also because I missed the feel of the Unified team and figured playing would be a good way to end my sophomore year. Warden, who plays every Unified sport, also joined volleyball. While more of my immediate friends were participating in other spring sports and couldn't play Unified, I was surrounded by new people, so I felt much more comfortable playing.

I remember liking the feel of volleyball for different reasons. I liked the fact that I could do a little more, and that I understood volleyball more. The season felt like it flew by and before we knew it, we were back at a championship game, ready to yet again take on the Dover Green Waves.

Unfortunately, I had to miss the game because I was under the weather, which was very disappointing. However, I was very proud of my team for taking home Oyster River's Unified sports' first championship in 2021. While I couldn't be there, knowing I



was on the team was reward enough.

In the fall of 2021, I returned to Unified Soccer and was surrounded by some of my old friends, as well as some new teammates. Tommy Fogg ('24) decided to join the team with his older brother that year. Fogg joined because "I thought it would be fun to help out others and get some extra exercise."

My experience and Fogg's experience were a bit different though. Being on the team for the second year now, I could feel the community of the team getting closer. I had begun to make a lot of new friends and was even given a nickname for my stellar defense: "Rabid Wolverine."

The season of 2021 taught everyone a lot. This year was a lot more focused on team bonding and really working hard. Fogg said that one of his biggest learning experiences with this team was "making everyone feel included and happy... Unified reminds you to always be nice to people."

Catherine Stevens also played Unified soccer in the 2021 season. While Unified has a lot of good things, Stevens thinks there are some things that can still be learned about Unified sports. "[I wish people knew] it's a serious thing. I feel like no one really takes it as seriously as other sports."

Attendance did increase though when Unified Soccer went to the NHIAA championship again, playing against the Green Waves for the third time. Because of this, fans made the effort to come to the game, and for me, that was an amazing thing to see. I enjoyed being cheered on by my teammates and peers. With the cheers, along with everyone playing so strong and working hard, Oyster River Unified took home another championship against Dover, and this time, I actually got to be there.

It felt amazing to get to be there and help my teammates. I played strong defense and when I heard the final buzzer of the game ending and saw my teammates celebrate as they rushed the field in a sea of hugs and high fives, I felt truly proud of the part I had played to get us here.

After that, more and more people started to recognize Unified, and that made my teammates and me feel amazing. People saw the true athletic hardship that goes into Unified and I think that was an

important thing. The other Unified sports also played well that season, but unfortunately, there were no more championships. Soccer was the only Unified sport I was able to play because of my busy junior year schedule, but that wouldn't stop me from returning for one last season.

This past 2022 soccer season, I went in with a positive attitude, but also a heavy heart. This would be my third and final year of Unified sports and I was emotional about that. The team also was missing a big part this season, and that was coach Alex Satterfield, who was no longer with the Oyster River School District.

While a lot of us missed the coach who has been with us for so long, we were very lucky to have a new coach join the team. Cam Calato, a paraeducator at Oyster River, stepped into the role in Satterfield's place. See Abby Deane's article, Unified Soccer – Returning Champs, to see how the team felt about this at the beginning of the year. While coaching Unified wasn't something he expected to be doing, he said, "When the position opened up, I wanted to do it. I knew it was going to be something I'd enjoy."

Calato was a very welcoming coach and took on the role with such passion. "[Unified] brings so many different types of people together." That was certainly something I loved about it too. I loved that I had my specific group of Unified friends which consisted of so many people. At this point, I had played for so long and knew everyone so well, returning for the fall season felt like such a relief.

This season was shocking to me because we had almost an undefeated season—we even beat Dover! The only team that we lost to was Exeter during the regular season. They deserved it though; they played super well and had a super strong team. However, the team felt as strong as ever this year. Everyone felt bonded so close, and I can definitely say that I was feeling a little teary-eyed about having to be done with each passing practice.

After an intense game with Keene in the semi-finals, I was worried that was going to be my last game. They were up by two and I could feel the team getting tired. However, sometimes I even doubt myself and the team pulled through in the second half and we won.

Going to Exeter that Sunday for the championship game, I felt so many emotions. I was ready to win and gave it all I had, while still accepting that this was my last Unified game. The team gave everything, we all played so hard. However, Exeter played a little harder and got to take home their first championship, which was good for them, but I could feel the tears beginning to well. It wasn't until one of my friends on the team, Alexa Gombar ('24) came up to me on the field after and asked me if I would still come to the games next year. That's when the tears began to flow as we shared a hug.

Unified was one of the most unexpected turns in my high school career. I never saw myself playing sports in high school, but I was lucky enough to be a part of one of the best teams at Oyster River. I have so many great friends on this team that I will never forget. In my opinion, Unified taught me more than anything else in high school, and I am so grateful I got to do it.

To all underclassmen, I would highly recommend joining a Unified sport. Unified will forever be my favorite sport, and my team was one of the best. I learned so many lessons that helped me on the field, and life lessons that I will hold now that I'm off the field.

- Tess Brown

Images courtesy of Madelyn Marthouse

Randy Kinzly Returns to Coach Girls' Varsity Basketball Team

On the wall just outside of the gym at Oyster River High School (ORHS) is a board labeled '1000 Point Club.' Listed second on that board, commemorating the 18 Oyster River basketball players who achieved 1000 points in their high school careers here, is Randy Kinzly. An Oyster River alum and former coach, a UNH graduate, and a Nike salesman for nearly 40 years, Kinzly has returned to the ORHS hardwood to coach the girls' varsity basketball team.

Between passion for basketball and his mentorship of his players, Kinzly has received a warm welcome from the girls' varsity team. "For me to come back to Oyster River is crazy. The kids have responded really well, the town and the parents have been very open. They just have opened their arms to me, you know, they've just been very supportive. It's been a really great experience so far," Kinzly said.



Kinzly moved to Durham from Buffalo, New York in 1974. Before coming here, he had been an avid football player, but ORHS' lack of a team led Kinzly to basketball. "[I] had never really played basketball, you know, just goofy gym things. I never really picked up a basketball; I just played football."

Kinzly's love for the sport grew quickly, to the point where he would attend every practice for both the girls' and boys' team. "I just started playing, probably too much as it hurt my studies, but I played all the time."

In his basketball career at ORHS Kinzly played in two championship games, with the team winning it all his sophomore year. "There were really no rules on [school] buses back then. We literally were in the isles dancing and singing and going all over. [...] That bus ride home from Plymouth was spectacular. I'll never forget that."

After graduating from ORHS in 1977, Kinzly took a post-grad year at Central Maine Institute, a boarding school in Pittsfield, Maine. There, he worked on improving his game and his grades before signing a full-ride scholarship to play basketball for the University of Maine (UMaine).

However, the summer before he began studying at UMaine, Kinzly's older brother, Michael Kinzly, passed away in a tragic motorcycle accident. "I was a young kid, really just out of high school. It was so unexpected. It was devastating, because he was my best friend."

Kinzly returned home to Durham to be with his parents. "My parents were just having a really hard time. [...] I didn't want to stay in my hometown to play basketball. I wanted to kind of branch out and see the world a little bit, so to speak, but I just couldn't leave my parents."

Dedicating his time to his family and earning a scholarship, Kinzly reached out to Gerry Friel, head basketball coach at the University of New Hampshire (UNH) throughout the 1970s and 80s, if he could play back home at UNH, leaving his contract with UMaine behind. "I went to Coach Friel and asked, 'Is there any opportunity for me [...] to play basketball here?' and he said, 'Yeah, absolutely. You're here. So, walk on and we'll see what happens.' His second semester that freshman year, Friel offered Kinzly a full-ride scholarship to UNH.

Kinzly played four years at UNH, being the captain of the team for three of those years.

Friel was a mentor to Kinzly during that time in his life. "I still look up to him in a lot of ways." Both in basketball and in life, Friel taught Kinzly to "Play as a family. If you can get a cohesive group together, even if you aren't as talented as some teams that are not cohesive, you're going to be successful in one way or another. It doesn't always equate to wins and losses, but it equates to long-term friendships, long-term relationships, and just a sense of doing something together, which I think is very powerful."

Right after graduating from UNH in 1981, before moving back to York, Kinzly was offered a job in sales at Nike after an assistant football coach at UNH who worked for Nike told him about an

open position. "I was [with Nike] for 39 years. I did all of our urban, inter-city business, all over New England and into New York City."

Kinzy's most memorable moment with Nike, although he regrets it now, was in 1984, during Michael Jordan's rookie season. Jordan gave a presentation introducing himself to Nike's sales force, which at the time included Kinzy. After the presentation, Jordan and the sales force were talking in the lobby. "[Jordan] goes 'so what are you guys doing this afternoon?' and we go 'I don't know, we've got some meetings and so forth,' and he goes 'I want to go bowling. Can you guys go bowling with me?' and I said 'no, man, we've got meetings.' [...] so I said no to Michael Jordan."

Now retired, Kinzy says, "It was a long, long ride, but it was just a great ride for me. I still stay at the store just to stay loyal to the company. [...] It's hard to explain the experiences I've had and where that afforded me to travel, and who I met, and who I was able to speak to and become friends with is really fascinating." Kinzy remains an 'athlete' with Nike, working at the Nike outlet in Kittery, Maine.

While with Nike full-time, Kinzy couldn't coach often. He started right out of college in 1982 coaching at summer camps and moved to coaching an 8th grade girls' team in York, Maine after he moved back there in 1988. As time went on, Kinzy moved towards coaching more often. He became the boys' junior varsity coach at York High School, then a boys' assistant varsity coach at ORHS. He then went back to coaching 8th grade girls' at York Middle School for 8 years before returning this summer to ORHS to coach the girls' varsity team.

"[Andy Lathrop] just called me this summer and said, 'would you be interested in at least thinking about taking this job?'" Kinzy wasn't sure if he wanted to return to coaching at the high school level but decided to give it a shot and accepted the invitation that Lathrop, athletic director at ORHS, had offered him.

Now back at ORHS, Kinzy is motivated by his ability to teach his team, both as a coach and mentor. "I love to teach the game [of basketball], and [...] my real hope is that, when this is all said and done, that I'm not just teaching basketball, but that I'm teaching other things about, like, how to move on in life, and how to succeed, and how to prepare for things that may happen."

Riley Drapeau ('24), a player for the Varsity girls' team, appreciates Kinzy's passion and mentorship. "He just cares for us so much, [...] it's definitely been really good for me as a player and me as a person; it really helps me grow."

Kinzy's direction has led the team to playing as a family, the same way Friel taught him while he played for UNH. "He's just really shaped our team in a way that we didn't think we could, because now we have a lot of cohesion, and we actually feel like a family and a team. We're not only playing better than we did last year, but we're actually like a family," says Drapeau.

Drapeau considers Kinzy the best coach she's ever had, and described him as "outstanding, compassionate, and caring."

Although the team loves Kinzy as a coach, Kinzy would rather be considered a teacher. "Many times, I don't really care to be called 'coach.' I believed that my interest is more in teaching than it is coaching. I know that there's some similarities, but that's where my mindset is, so that's what I try to do each day with these kids."

Kristina Hathaway, an assistant coach with Kinzy, has seen the cohesion that the team has found with Kinzy as their coach. He's made their season not about winning, but more about having a fun, meaningful season as a team. "After the first game that we'd won,



Randy had brought little tiny water bottles and balloons. He said to me before the game, 'I hope I'm not jinxing it, but I did bring water bottles and balloons,' and he hid them in the locker room. After our first win, we went into the locker room and we broke out all the water bottles, and [...] we sprayed [them] everywhere. And the girls went bananas."

Kinzy looks up to his team that same way they look up to him. "These girls have grown from the time I met in June, to where they are now, so I don't think there's any limits on this group of kids. I've been so impressed with them; how hard they've worked, how well they listen, and how well they take to instruction. They've been great."

As the season continues, Kinzy wants the team to have their heads held high. "I just want [...] these young women feel very comfortable in their own voice, in who they are, and understand that they can do anything they want to do. They literally can accomplish anything."

- Justin Partis

Images courtesy of Madelyn Marthouse

T E D I O U S

Every school and every generation had that one group of kids who communicated more effectively through The Pentatonic Scale than the English language

I first saw Tedious, an electric rock band composed of Oyster River juniors, take the stage in the spring of last year. It was the night of the quarter four Coffeehouse and I had arrived just in time to hear the MC invite them to the stage.

“Alright, please give it up for...,” the MC paused to ask the band what they wanted to be called. Thinking about it only briefly beforehand, Micah Bessette ('24), the bassist, called out Tasty. The band shrugged, then nodded in agreement. “OK,” the MC continued. “Everybody put your hands together for Tasty!”

When Tasty, who later renamed themselves Tedious, first walked onto the stage, you never would have known it was only their second time playing together. As they adjusted their mic stands and plugged their guitars into amps, they seemed to carry themselves with a certain professionalism, despite their shaky hands and nervous glances back and forth at one another.

But, after Molly Schmidt ('24), the band's singer, gave a firm head nod toward lead guitarist, Logan Jabour ('24), as if to say, “there's no going back now,” the band's drummer, Miles Gans ('24), counted the band into their first song: “The Middle” by Jimmy Eat World.

I still remember how pulsating the opening riff was, so much so that audience members with their backs against the stage physically turned their heads to see who was playing. The band, who were gaining

confidence with every chord change, was tight, and their chemistry was palpable.

Jabour later confessed that although he looked composed, he was terrified, given the most he had ever performed in front of a crowd was during his middle school jazz band concerts. “When it's just the four of us up there, it's different; all eyes are on you,” he told me. However, whenever Jabour would begin to clam up he said looking down at his guitar, closing his eyes, and just “feeling the music” calmed his nerves. Getting through those rough patches, and nailing the riffs he had expected to bomb, reminded him of how hard he had worked to get to that moment and how right it felt playing with his bandmates.

For me, one of the most interesting staples of high school life is the high school rock band. From long-haired Jimmy Page wannabes to rap groups formed in the wake of Wu-Tang Clan stardom, every school and every generation had that one group of kids who communicated more effectively through The Pentatonic Scale than the English language.

When I set out to cover Tedious, I expected it would be a typical story on a young rock band. Something that showcased their talents, reflected on the obstacles they've overcome, and highlighted their hopes for the future. But, when I learned of how the band came together, and of their plans to split up after high school, I was surprised by how blunt they were. Don't get me wrong, I know most high school bands don't last past graduation, but typically band members will uphold the dream for as long as possible, until they're finally able to admit such an ending is inevitable.

I was shocked by the band's honesty with themselves, and this honesty revealed a whole world of questions I hadn't previously considered: Why dedicate so much time and energy toward something that's eventually going to end? How do you form a cohesive band when everyone has different music tastes and styles? What purpose does the band fulfill that other things in their life can't?

Like most high school music groups, none

of the band's members ever expected they would end up performing together. In fact, when the idea to form a band was first proposed in the spring of last year, Bessette, Schmidt, Jabour, and Gans had barely played alongside other people.

“Up until that point, all of our music journeys had been pretty individual, meaning we all pretty much developed a love of playing and creating music on our own before joining any sort of group,” said Jabour, who laughed when he admitted that instead of seeking out people to jam with, he would spend hours isolated in his room, learning Iron Maiden riffs by ear.

I. The Instigator

With his “half-shaved, half-Lennon flow” hairstyle and his refusal to wear anything but band tees, it's hard to imagine Jabour as anything other than a lead guitarist. However, Jabour says his musical career kick-started in elementary and middle school band rehearsals, where he first learned “the art of the trombone.” It wasn't until the sixth grade, when he taught himself both piano and guitar, that he began to crave the feeling of “release” that playing music gave him.

When I spoke with Jabour, it was apparent he was one of those people who doesn't just love music, but lives for it. As I peppered him with endless questions about artists and albums, he told me about his favorite bands, the addictions they battled, the albums they sold out on, and the songs that made them. His mind functions as a sort of pop culture repository, where obscure music trivia and the hundreds of band names and song titles he's committed to memory have accumulated over the years.

By sophomore year, Jabour was dedicating more time outside of school to perfect riffs and was striving towards rocking like some of his idols, Corey Taylor and Tony Iommi. But even though he was sounding better every day, Jabour was convinced his lack of confidence was obstructing his abil-



Jabour (left) and Gans (right) warming-up before Tedium's performance at the Freedom Café in November 2022



ity to take his music outside the security of his bedroom. So, when he heard someone playing “The Trooper” by Iron Maiden during Flex one day, he suppressed his nerves and jumped at the opportunity to join in on the harmonies. “That was the first time I ever played with someone, and it just struck a chord in me, you know?... When I play on my own, I feel great, but after that moment, it just felt complete. It was the final piece I needed; I needed to play with people,” said Jabour.

people call him one) and got his musical start playing the trombone through the fifth to the ninth grade. He switched over to drums after he got tired of pretending that brass instruments were his thing. “There’s not a lot of expression in playing the trombone ‘cause everything’s very structured. Part of drumming is learning to be free and learning to improvise and express your feelings through the beat. Drumming just always seemed more me,” said Gans.

My first conversation with Gans, which consisted of me pestering him with questions as he sloppily assembled his electric drum set in the corner, occurred an hour before the band was set to perform at the Freedom Café. Almost immediately, I could tell that Gans was a deeply private person by the way he anxiously tapped his fingers on the table and, within the first five minutes of our interview, ironically

told me he “disliked the idea of publicity.” However, as soon as he switches out his finger drumsticks for real ones, it’s as though he adopts a new rock and roll persona. One that allows him to let go and leave everything —the sadness, the stress, the anxiety— on the floor, in front of everyone.

When Gans admitted that he hoped to someday rock like John Bonham of Led Zeppelin and jam with some of his other inspirations, I questioned why drumming had a hold on him that some of his other passions, like singing, didn’t.

“I think being the backbone of the music is where I like to be,” he told me. “You know, keeping the beat and the tempo, I feel like I have power and responsibility. That’s why when Logan was talking to me about starting a band, I was in... I guess I was ready to be that backbone for people.”

During Jabour’s and Gans’ advisory

II. The Backbone

A couple of days after his “Flex jam session,” Jabour asked his longtime friend, Miles Gans, during advisory if he wanted to start a band. Like Jabour, Gans is also a musician (even though he denies it when

conversation, Molly Schmidt, who also happens to be in the same advisory, claims she was “sucked in” when one of her friends advertised her singing abilities to the boys. “At first, I was convinced [Jabour and Gans] were joking about [forming a band], but when they kept bringing it up days later, I was like, oh, so this really happening.”

III. The Mitski Lover

Schmidt, the group’s lead singer, said she finds it ironic she wound up in a band with two guys who love metal, given her taste is a mix of indie, alternative, rock and “so much Mitski she should basically qualify as her own genre.” Unlike Jabour and Gans, Schmidt’s love of music developed at the age of seven through her love of musicals and singing. She finally picked up the piano and guitar over quarantine because she was sick of performing alongside cheesy karaoke tracks on YouTube.

Schmidt told me she mostly uses music to be honest with herself and to document her life, something she accomplishes through frantic songwriting sessions where her only goal is to dump her thoughts onto the page. Although she enjoys shredding with the boys on electric guitar, she told me she feels most herself when the music is stripped down so that it’s just her voice and her acoustic guitar; no gimmicks. “It’s nice to play alone because you don’t have to worry about all these extra things coming together. It’s just you, and you can just be super authentic,” said Schmidt. However, while Schmidt finds value in playing music individually, she also admitted she was ready for more than just playing acoustic songs in her bedroom. Schmidt didn’t know what the band would amount to, but she didn’t care; she just wanted something fun to do with her free time.

Now, with Schmidt on board, “it felt like it was actually going to come together,” said Jabour.

Before the band’s first official practice, Gans recruited bassist Micah Bessette (‘24), a.k.a “the final piece to the puzzle.”



Schmidt waiting for her cue to sing during an open-mic night in November 2022

VI. The Final Piece

Bessette, whose tall stature, lanky frame, and gentle grip on the bass resembles that of a young John McVie, told me becoming a musician was inevitable, given he comes from a family of musicians. However, despite the fact he’s been surrounded by music from a young age and vividly remembers the hours he would spend banging plastic drums and xylophones with his brother, he claims he didn’t feel a true love for music until he received his bass last Christmas. In his own words, learning how to play the bass “triggered a sort of musical domino effect.”

“I just played the bass every day and couldn’t stop analyzing baselines whenever I would listen to music,” said Bessette. “After picking up the bass, I found myself listening to more and more music and began playing more instruments, like the piano. I think I could spend days trapped in my room writing melodies.”

Bessette recalled how the first song the band played lit a spark beneath all of them. Some of them were uncertain if their new arrangement would last past the first prac-



“At the end of the day that’s why we joined the band—to be a part of something that’s just bigger than ourselves.”

tice. They were uncertain how they could form a cohesive group when all of them had different musical tastes, experiences, and ambitions. But, for some reason, as soon as Jabour played the opening riff of Nirvana’s infamous ‘90s anthem, “Smells Like Teen Spirit,” everything fell into place. “The funniest part is, I don’t think we’ve ever gotten it as polished as we did the first time we played it,” Gans said. “Maybe the universe was throwing us a bone and telling us we had to keep going.”

When I asked them to articulate what was going through their heads the moment the final notes of the song reverberated into the emptiness of Schmidt’s basement, all of them told me the feeling was so gratifying it couldn’t be put into words.

“I remember looking over at Miles and laughing when we were practicing because the smile on his face just kept getting bigger and bigger once he knew everything was coming together. I could feel it too; we all could,” Schmidt said. Beyond her initial shock that the band didn’t completely fall apart after the first verse, Schmidt recalled feeling an unexpected closeness to the kids she had always passed in the hallways, but never took the time to know.

“Even though we all have really different music tastes and different ideas of where we want to go individually as musicians, we just work well together...The more we

started playing, the more I began to see the band as my *in* to becoming friends with these amazing people...We had been in the same advisory for almost two years, but it was playing music that actually brought us together,” said Schmidt.

Even on the days when the performances aren’t great, the practices aren’t efficient, and the rhythm is off-kilter, Gans likes to remind himself that it was never about perfection in the first place. To him, the band only serves a purpose if it’s authentic, if it’s enjoyable, and if they “just show up to play for the hell of it,” not because they’re expecting validation for putting on a good show.

“Honestly, this band won’t last past high school—I mean, why would it? But, when I’m an adult and look back on it, I know it’s not going to have been for nothing. I feel like this band is giving me musical experiences. It’s giving me this opportunity to make mistakes and to learn from those now, and that’s something I’ll take with me if I ever do something with music in the future,” said Gans.

Now, over six months after their first rehearsal, I sit and watch as the band prepares for their twelfth open mic night and observe them as they nervously fiddle around with their instruments.

When they get on stage, you would never know they just spent half of their prac-

tice time fooling around as they play hits from The Talking Head’s “Psycho Killer” to The Smashing Pumpkins’ “Bullet with Butterfly Wings.” After attending their last three consecutive shows, I can confidently say that no performance is the same, and no performance is better than the other. I have realized that, while their musical ability sets them apart from other high school bands, so does their connection.

A few days after the open mic performance, Jabour told me he had an answer as to why he dedicates so much time to a band that would likely separate within the next two years. “It’s for moments like the one we had last [performance],” he told me. “We never went into this band thinking we could become famous or whatever, we did it so we could just share what we love and do what we love...When I look back on my high school days, I’m going to see us, as one unit, jamming on stage...I’m going to see us in Laforce’s room before Coffeehouse, messing around on his keyboards. I’ll see us during our first practice in [Schmidt’s] basement, hitting every note. At the end of the day, that’s why we joined the band—to be a part of something that’s just...bigger than ourselves.”

- Abby Owens
Images Courtesy of Hazel Stasko

Electing for Excitement: Fun Classes You Should Take

I remember staring at my computer screen in the middle school library as the teachers assisted us in signing up for our first high school classes. Even though the majority of the classes had already been predetermined for us, there was one block up for choice. I looked through all the classes offered in The Program of Studies feeling very overwhelmed. Eventually, I gave up and went with the safe choice of a study hall. Now looking back on this as a senior, I know that a study hall is not needed freshman year, and I regret not using the opportunity to sign up for a fun elective. As time runs out on my high school career there are many classes I wish I could have taken.

Signing up for classes can be stressful, especially with a loaded Program of Studies. At first glance, the classes offered can seem intimidating, but hearing from students who have taken these classes can ease these nerves. Whether it's cooking a full course meal or making movies, courses at Oyster River can be a blast. Juniors and Seniors at Oyster River have given their input on their favorite electives, and strongly recommend students sign up for them next year.

Introduction to Culinary

An area of classes I wish I had more time in my schedule for were the culinary and cooking classes, but it is common knowledge that classes taught by Nick Ricciardi tend to be the hardest to get into due to their popularity. Many students sign up for these classes because the perception of them is that they are easy and fun classes. But do students really know what the classes entail?

Haley Pickering ('23), has taken multiple classes taught by Ricciardi and says that her favorite class has been Introduction to Culinary. Pickering describes the class saying, "we'll do a lesson on a specific [cooking] technique or specific type of food for one day and then we'll watch a video, or we'll talk about it. The next day we'll go in and put it to use in the kitchens."

Pickering has also taken Nutrition and Fuel and Fitness but says Culinary has been the most enjoyable. "I like being able to cook because it is more of a hands-on learning activity." She even said that she would recommend this class more than a Ricciardi class like Bake Shop. "We've done things from making breakfast foods all the way to making our own pastas...it's more diverse than Bake Shop would be in terms of the kinds of foods that you make."

Unfortunately, I have not had the luck of getting into multiple classes taught by Ricciardi. However, I took Fuel and Fitness (now Nutrition) in my sophomore year. Despite the class being online for the majority of the year due to the pandemic, it was one of my favorite classes, and not just because it was easy. The class was my favorite because of the amount of new information I learned from it.

As someone who participates in school sports this class gave me a strong understanding of how to properly train and nourish my body (hence the name, Fuel and Fitness). I learned quick meals to use before practice or game, and I learned how to safely and effectively create a workout plan that will benefit me in the sports I play. If you're a student athlete or you enjoy going to the gym and want to learn how to make the most of it, Nutrition would be the perfect class for you!



Team and Individual Sports

If instead of learning about being active, if you want to participate in athletics during school, look at the EPW (Exercise Physiology and Wellness) electives. Although freshman gym class is not for everyone, the EPW department provides a wide variety of electives that tend to be more enjoyable for students, even if they did not find success their freshman year. As someone who struggled in EPW and took the chance of signing up for this elective, it was worth it.

"Mr. Maynard treats everybody with maturity and everyone there is really excited to play whatever game or unit we're doing," said Waverly Oake-Libow ('23) when discussing her experience in Team and Individual sports and how it differs from EPW.

This class, taught by EPW teacher Don Maynard, is open to grades 10-12. So far this year, Oake-Libow says the class has played sports like volleyball, flag football, and softball. "We'll give [Mr. Maynard] a list of the sports the class is interested in playing over the semester. Then, we start the unit and [Mr. Maynard] create fair teams and even lets members of the class contribute to make the teams."

Oake-Libow says the games are competitive but fun because the class gets to choose what they are doing. "Mr. Maynard will really hype you up and he makes the games really exciting. Everybody there has a lot of fun while also taking it seriously enough."

As someone who is currently taking the class, I recommend signing up for it with your friends. Having familiar people with you who you feel comfortable with can make the class more enjoyable and encourages more participation.



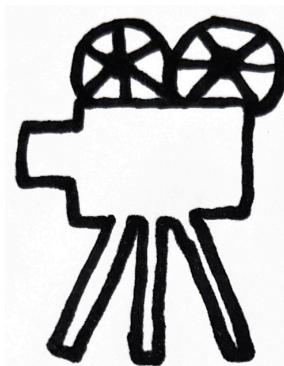
Digital and Video Production

Subjects like Social Studies, English, and World Language also have some of the favorite electives in Oyster River. Although sophomore year English classes are limited, Devon Wasiewski ('23), recommends adding Digital Video Production to your schedule.

The class is taught by English teacher Jennifer Weeks and has been a popular way to earn the English communication credit needed to graduate. "Throughout the semester, you are given prompts of digital videos you can create... the first few assignments you can either make a music video, podcast, day in the life, or DIY video," said Wasiewski.

For me, public speaking and presentations cause me a great deal of stress. The idea of taking a discussion-based English class scared me and I tried to put it off for as long as I could. I wish I knew that Digital Video Production could've filled that communication credit, so I didn't have to deal with the stress of public speaking.

Another benefit Wasiewski mentions is that as the class goes on, you get more freedom in the types of videos you make which spark a lot of creativity. If you are looking for an English class that gives you opportunities to be creative and are want a switch from the typical essay writing English classes, Digital Video Production is the class for you!



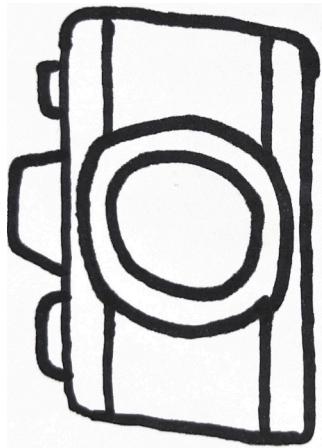
Introduction to Photography

Like Digital Video Production, there are many other electives that offer a great deal of creativity. Gabby Harriton ('24), recommends Introduction to Photography, a class offered through the Art Department. Personally, I am not a talented artist and the idea of taking an art class to fill the Fine Arts credit to graduate stressed me out. I ended up taking Introduction to Art and did not enjoy the class because I was self-conscious of my work. If this sounds like you, taking a Photography class could be a great way to earn your Fine Arts credit.

Harriton says that the class is not only about learning what to photograph, but also how. "You learn how to use the camera and learn all the different buttons on it. Then there are six units where you learn how to photograph certain things." Harriton says her favorite class was when they learned to photograph birds. "We sat outside the entire class on the field just taking pictures; I had a lot of fun."

Although the word "Introduction" in front of a class title might make it sound easier, Harriton says that would not apply to this class. Like what I experienced when taking Introduction to Art, the class requires a lot of work to be put into it. Harriton describes this saying, "be prepared to get creative. A lot of people take the class thinking it's going to be an 'easy A', but you have to work for it."

However, don't let the effort aspect of the class discourage you from taking it. Harriton mentions that it was a nice break in her day compared to the rest of her classes. I think this is something that is important for students to have. Even though I consider art one of my weaknesses, having an art class during the day helped me decompress from the constant stress of academic classes.



Other classes to keep on your radar when signing up for classes this year include Introduction to Art recommended by Talia Banafato ('24), Nutrition recommended by Sophia Royal ('23), Evolution of Film recommended by Melanie Storace ('24), Women's Literature recommended by Sophia Duyon ('24), and Sociology recommended by Riley Drapeau ('24).

As time flies by in your high school career, remember that not all high school is supposed to be stressful. Signing up for fun electives is a way to balance your day so that the whole school day doesn't feel like a drag. Hopefully these classes recommended by students will help you find ways to spice up your schedule and make for a fun high school experience.

- Abby Deane

Ye or Nay?

Content Warning: Readers should be advised this article contains topics of sexual assault, antisemitism, and violence.

It's November 30th. You see the notification drop down: "Your 2022 wrapped has arrived." This would normally bring excitement, but this year you almost feel dread. You know who is going to be your number one artist and that means you can't post on Instagram because, let's be honest, you don't want to celebrate the fact that you were in the top 0.1% of listeners to a Nazi sympathizer, right?

directly or indirectly supporting.

I talked to Madeline Healey ('25), who agreed that separating art from the artist can be difficult. She said, "it's impossible to *completely* separate the two because no matter what form the art is or who the artist is they're always going to be connected." When making my decisions of who I listen to, it does tend to be very situational. An artist is going to be very embed-

no effect money-wise which could be true, but it's not even really about the money to me. It's about not normalizing hate speech and not just accepting it by refusing to listen to his music.

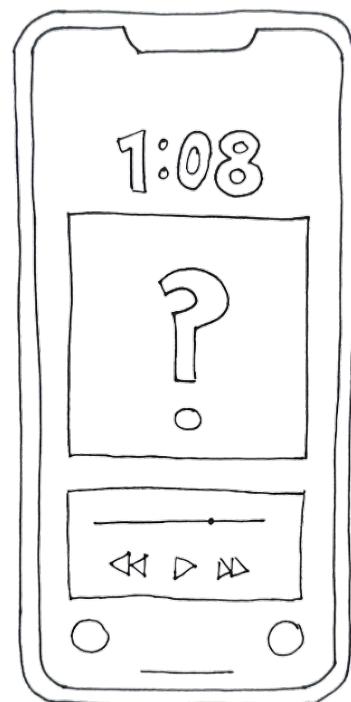
Just for fun, I researched how much one stream gives an artist on Spotify: approximately \$0.04 for 10 streams. That seems very small and insignificant but when an artist like Ye has 49,321,109 monthly listeners on Spo

“It’s impossible to *completely* separate the two because no matter what form the art is or who the artist is they’re always going to be connected.”

Last issue I worked on the MOR video "Headphones in the Hallway" which was about what music ORHS students listen to and why. As the video developed, I observed many students listening to Ye (formerly known as Kanye West). Soon after, controversy arose surrounding Ye and antisemitic comments he was making. I stopped listening to Ye after finding that out because I knew streaming an artist's music gives them royalties and I didn't want to support him or contribute to his platform. This made me think about the artists I listen to a lot more and made me question whether an artist can be separated from their art. I'm not saying that everyone needs to stop listening to any problematic artist, but I do think people need to *think* before listening and learn more about the artists they are

ded in the art they produce so by listening or supporting their art, I usually feel like I am supporting them as a person and the decisions they make.

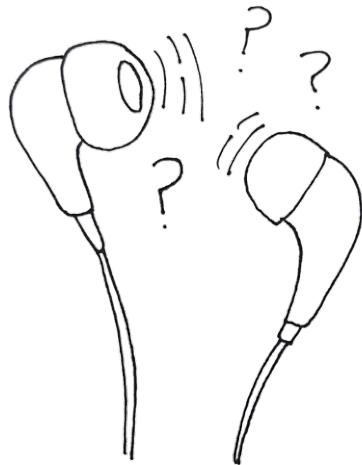
Don't get me wrong, Ye's album *Graduation* was all over my playlist and I was a big fan of "Runaway," but I stopped listening to him. I'm Jewish and I do not feel comfortable listening to the art from someone who was saying hateful things about people like me. I remember some of my friends who were big fans saying "separate the art from the artist" after I skipped him on aux, but I just couldn't. Yes, I miss listening to some of his songs, but I knew that by streaming Ye's songs, I would be contributing a small amount of royalties that would be distributed to him. I didn't want to be a part of that. People may say that listening has almost



tify, that number adds up quickly. If each one of those listeners were to listen to just one song (\$0.004) Ye would make almost \$200,000. According to the *New York Post*, Ye made approximately \$250 million in 2021 from royalties and other income sources like his profits from Yeezy sales and his former partnership with the Gap. People who listen to Ye now are still giving him power and a platform, even without brand deals, which gives him money through media exposure.

According to the NPR article, "How antisemitic rhetoric is impacting Jewish communities and what to

You can't always take the music as it is without factoring in who the person is as well," said Ajit before the allegations were dropped. O'Connor denied the allegations against him but after hearing about it, both Ajit and I had stopped listening to him just like how I stopped listening to Ye. At the time before they were dropped, I just couldn't listen to him singing lyrics like "I'll be the one that proposes in a garden of roses and truly loves you long after our curtain closes," knowing what he had been accused of. Another thing to keep in mind is that even though the charges were



"You can't separate art from the artist especially with music because it's so personal"

do about it," "Ye has twice as many Twitter followers as there are Jews on Earth." Since Ye made his antisemitic comments, there have been violent threats made to synagogues and there was even a banner hung on a freeway in LA saying "Kanye was right about the Jews." Giving him any sort of platform or even just ignoring the fact that he is spreading antisemitic ideas is creating bigger problems. In the article, Deborah Lipstadt phrased this idea very well: "the longest and oldest hatred" is being normalized anew – making people think it's ok to do or say certain things."

I talked to Maya Ajit ('23) who stopped listening to one of her favorite artists, Alexander O'Connor (otherwise known as Rex Orange County) after sexual assault allegations came out against him. The allegations were dropped on December 22, 2022. "Personally, I think you can't separate art from the artist especially with music because it's so personal.

dropped, it doesn't mean the alleged incidents didn't happen. The victim could very much be telling the truth, but for various reasons O'Connor isn't being prosecuted. The charges were dropped by the Crown Prosecution Service, not the victim.

Andrea von Oeyen, the orchestra teacher at Oyster River High School, has needed to separate art from the artist in the classroom. I play violin in orchestra and remember playing a piece by the composer Richard Wagner who was suspected of being a Nazi sympathizer in the 1800s. She shared what was going through her mind when picking this piece and said, "transparency is really important where you tell students that 'this is an important, historical piece of music and here's why' but also, we shouldn't hide the fact that this composer also has some more controversial ties."

To me, Wagner is a situation where it is more 'ok' to listen or play his mu-

sic. Although he was suspected to be a Nazi sympathizer like Ye, Ye has a much bigger platform given that he is still alive. What Wagner did was still wrong, but he can't spread hate or use his platform the way that Ye can and does. Wagner's history can also be used as a learning tool in the classroom since he is no longer around to continue spreading the hateful ideas he once allegedly supported.

So, when is it acceptable to listen to a problematic artist? It comes down to you and your own comfort level. However, I hope now that when you click shuffle on your playlist and you see the name of an artist who has been in the news lately, you google them. I hope you take the time to do some thinking and determine whether the art is *really worth* separating from the artist.

- Libby Davidson

Club or Sport? Why Not Both?

We really love sports here at Oyster River. In fact, over 70% of Oyster River High School students participate in a sport. They build team communities, keep athletes in shape, and can even provide high level athletes with scholarships. JV athletes also benefit from playing sports, but JV sports are too restricting for developing high schoolers.



cross-country, writing, hiking, and photography—to name a few. During the seasons I play sports, I never have any time to pursue my other hobbies, so I think at least JV sports should allow flexibility in athletes' schedules, so that they have time to explore their other interests.

I'm not ashamed to say I've run on the JV cross-country team for three years, and I enjoy it every year. I think the reason I didn't make varsity this year is because instead of giving cross-country my full attention, I attempted (and mostly failed) to pursue my other interests. I understand why coaches want their athletes' full attention, and I'm a good example be-

High school is the best time to find out what you enjoy. Since my freshmen year, I've found I'm passionate about many things like music, track, theatre,

cause if I was completely focused on cross-country I would have improved much more. The problem is, alongside many other athletes, I am not concerned about becoming the best. We just want to improve enough with the added benefit of playing a fun sport.

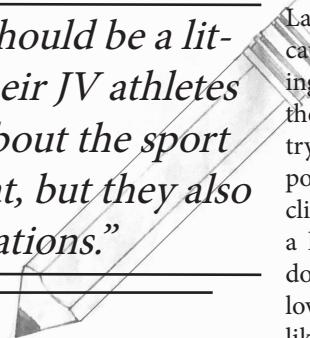
There are many student athletes who have missed out because of the strict JV sport schedule. This year was the first that Kate Stone ('24) joined the cross-country team. She really enjoyed it and liked the idea of joining the indoor track team. The problem was that she's also one of the vice presidents of the debate team and wanted to do that alongside track. She went up to the indoor track coaches and said something along the lines of "hi, debate team is really important to me and I'm a big part of it, but I'm [also] really interested in doing indoor track. I have to be able to do some of these [debate] tournaments, so I would probably miss one, maybe two meets." Stone was told she could not run indoor track if she was also planning on committing to debate.

I've never played a winter sport because of this. There are so many things I want to try, and I would never be able to try all of them if I played a sport for

all three seasons.

Last winter, because I wasn't playing a sport, I got the opportunity to try clubs like ping pong and rock climbing. I also had a lot more time to do things that I've loved for a while, like skiing and ice skating with friends and family. I even tried pond

"I think [the coaches] should be a little more flexible with their JV athletes if they are passionate about the sport and the coach knows that, but they also have other obligations."



hockey for the first time! This year because I'm not playing a winter sport, I finally had the opportunity to join the winter musical, which is something I've wanted to do for a while.

Ulysses Smith ('25), an athlete on the JV soccer team, loves to write. He wanted to join the writing club, which meets once a week, but he could not because of his strict soccer schedule. "I wanted to go to writing club, which happens on Thursdays. Since I had soccer practice right after school, I wasn't able to go."

Smith explains how the varsity soccer team practiced at different times than JV. "They had practice from five to seven, so they could go to a club [after school] and then go to practice later, so I found that kind of unfair."

Stone thinks coaches should give their JV athletes time to participate in other activities. "I think [the coaches] should be a little more flexible with their JV athletes if they are passionate about the sport and the coach knows that, but they also have other obligations."

Smith felt similarly and thought that JV coaches should make that exception for their athletes who have multiple interests. "On a sports team you practice every day of the week, but [most] clubs only happen one day a week. [...] I feel like it's not that big of a deal to miss one practice and make one exception a week for you to go and explore different areas of life rather than focusing on sports all the time."

Being able to miss one practice a week sounds great for individuals, but missing athletes every practice would affect the team. Andy Lathrop, the high schools' director of athletics understands the struggles of students trying to do it all, but brings up a

good point. "It can be tough because there are other things that people want to do but when you have people coming and going it's kind of disruptive to the whole team."

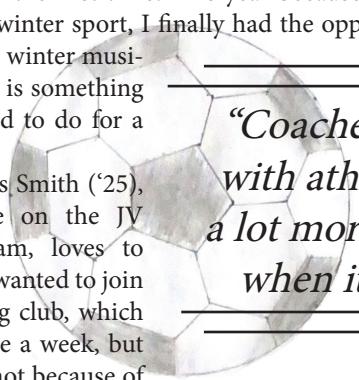
I completely understand this and know it's hard to have a team when no one shows up. I think it will always be unacceptable to miss a practice for a club with no prior warning to

coaches and teammates, but your team will be much more understanding if they know weeks in advance. "Coaches are willing to work with athletes, [...] and there's a lot more leniency and leeway when it's done in advance," states Lathrop.

Stone decided that it wasn't the coaches' fault, but the fault of policy. "I'm not upset at the coaches for saying that because that's sort of their overarching policy." After I heard this, I read through both the NHIAA policy handbook and the official ORHS athletic handbook. The NHIAA said nothing about athletes missing practices, and the ORHS athletic handbook said: "participation in any sport requires that athletes adhere to attendance requirements specified by the coach. Disciplinary measures will be taken by coaches for missed practices."

This means that it's up to the coaches to decide how they will handle the attendance policy for their JV athletes. I think JV athletes should be allowed to participate in a club or outside activity that they enjoy once a week, if their coach and teammates are notified about it at the beginning of the season. This way, athletes wouldn't have to feel guilty for pursuing other interests, JV athletes would be incentivized to try new things, and students would be much more open to joining a sports team. If that was the rule, I might even be able to finally try a winter sport!

- Micah Bessette



"Coaches are willing to work with athletes, [...] and there's a lot more leniency and leeway when it's done in advance."



A LESSON AGAINST SPECIALIZING IN SPORTS

“The culture now is to the point where kids spend every waking hour either doing homework, in school, or playing their one single sport and they don’t have a life outside of that.”



At the beginning of freshman year, I decided to quit basketball and running to focus on golf. That was one of the worst decisions I've ever made.

I had been playing a variety of other sports for my entire life. Playing multiple sports growing up affected how I viewed myself as an athlete, because it allowed me to be multidimensional instead of just the "golf kid." When that variety disappeared so I could prioritize golf, I was left without balance and felt like I was losing my way.

More and more students have been making the decision to focus on just one sport instead of playing multiple their whole lives, a decision which is detrimental to athletes' mental health and performance as a whole. Specializing so much in one sport has gotten to the point where we aren't having fun anymore.

I've seen this issue in countless other student-athletes, but I'll begin on this point with my own story. When I played multiple sports, I had a cushion when things weren't going my way on the golf course. I knew that maybe it wasn't a golf day, but I could run a great race or play well in a basketball game. Playing more than one sport helped me be more patient with myself when I had an off day.

Losing that cushion made me feel pressure from not just myself but also other people. As I transitioned to specializing in golf, I felt like my teammates, coaches, and entire school needed me to play well, and there wasn't room for me to be less than perfect. Stemming from those pressures, I wasn't happy playing golf. I had countless nights where I thought about giving up because what was the point in continuing to play if I wasn't good enough.

Playing multiple sports also gives you numerous opportunities to physically improve your game. Maeve Hickok ('24) is a three-sport varsity athlete has been playing multiple sports for "pretty much as long as I can remember." She said that "you can't play multiple sports and not have them benefit one another, even if one sport is your favorite. By playing soccer in the fall, it's still going to help you with lacrosse in the spring." Individual sports have lots of commonalities between them, from the physical movements required to the mental aspect of the sport.

Like Hickok, I have gained transferrable skills from the sports I've tried over the years. I would not be the golfer that I am today if I hadn't played other sports. For example, when I played basketball, I was forced to build a lot of strength to make a free throw. When I took that strength back to golf, I suddenly noticed that I had gained significant distance in my golf game.

While there's so much to be gained from playing multiple sports, it also doesn't make much sense for most students to just focus on one. Don Maynard currently teaches EPW at Oyster River High School and has been a coach and the school's athletic director. He said, "there are so many times where kids specialize in one sport, and in all honesty, they aren't usually that good. Odds are... they aren't going to get a full ride or even come close to going pro. So, in my opinion, there's no place for focusing on one sport until maybe high school if you really do have the talent to try to take it to the next level."

The key thing that I take away from my time playing multiple sports is the ability to look back and just smile. I am reminded of all of the fun moments because that is what sports are supposed to be: fun. Playing other sports helped me grow my passion for golf by reminding me of the values of the game aside from just the physical techniques. When

I began my time as a one sport athlete that cushion was lost and maintaining the fun experience became increasingly difficult. Sports are above all else supposed to be fun and remind us to be grateful for the ability to play.

There are people who decide to specialize in one sport and have loved it and been happy and successful in those endeavors long term. Some people find their real talent and feel content with that, but for many of us, having variety helps add padding to the cushion and helps us be better overall. Plus, there are only benefits in playing multiple sports so why not continue with that?

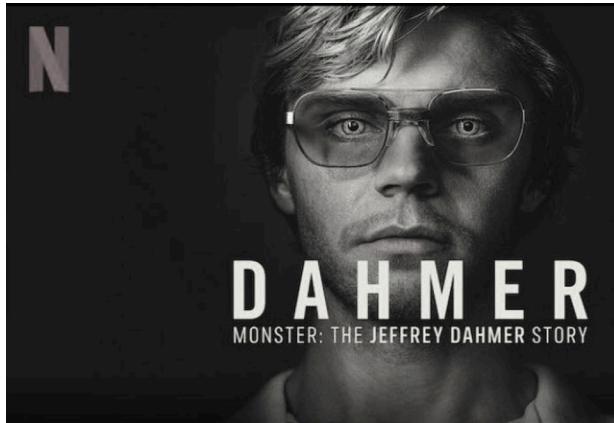
There are a handful of success stories for one sport athletes but for many not having the multi-sport cushion can destroy a promising athlete's career. One of my good

friends with whom I played golf growing up was an incredible player. Her entire life was golf. She never had the opportunity to play another sport. She didn't know anything else because that was what had been forced upon her for as long as she could remember. Shortly after she played in a big tournament with the best players from around the country, I didn't see her on the course as much. Even in the latest rounds I played with her, she never seemed to be having fun with the golf aspect. She didn't have the cushion of other sports that many of our peers had, and the pressure built up. In her sophomore year, she quit golf for good. Someone with so much talent burnt out at just 16.

Don't let this happen to you. It is imperative that student-athletes are able to hone their skills, avoid burnout, and become the best overall athletes and people that we can be by participating in multiple sports.

- Delaney Nadeau

Dying to Know Why



Why do people romanticize serial killers?

As I watched Jeffery Dahmer brutally stab someone on my laptop screen in front of me, the last thing on my mind was how hot I thought he was.

Throughout my whole life, I have always been fascinated with horror, whether it's fictitious or true. The thing I have found the most fascinating though, is serial killers: the psychology behind what makes them commit their crimes, their backstories—everything. As I got older, I realized that there were many who liked these horror stories for the same reason. However, some have begun to find these serial killers attractive and sympathize with them



for different reasons.

The biggest thing I have noticed in movies made about these stories are the actors. In my opinion, I loved seeing some of my favorite actors play these dark roles. This really stood out to me when I watched the show *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* on Netflix which retold Dahmer's story. This show starred Evan Peters as Dahmer. Peters had originally gained fame in his role as Tate, as well as other characters in another popular horror show, *American Horror Story*, so I felt this dark and eerie role would suit him well. What stood out to others though, was how attractive peo-

ple thought Jeffery Dahmer was because of Peter's role. The biggest thing was video edits highlighting how attractive people found Peter's as Dahmer.

I was incredibly taken aback by this. As I thought more and more about this, digging into what people thought, I realized this wasn't the first time this had happened. A couple years ago, another TV show was made about Ted Bundy titled *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile*. Zac Efron took on the role and played it well. While this wasn't a show I watched, I still remember people glorifying Ted Bundy and his crimes just because of the actor who played him.

Another example of this was when Ross Lynch played Jeffery Dahmer in the film, *My Friend Dahmer*. Now, Lynch has been a celebrity crush of mine since the early days of *Austin and Ally*. When I watched this movie though, I wasn't attracted to Dahmer because he was played by Lynch. I feared the character he had played. That was hard for me to differentiate too at the time because you want to



associate your favorite actors with their characters, but doing that with him, even thinking about it made me feel...icky.

This really stuck with me when I was watching this. It felt disrespectful and honestly, just kind of gross, and I wasn't alone. I

had put a poll on Instagram posing the question: are serial killers romanticized in the media? Sixty-three people answered this, 54 people (86%) agreed with what I was thinking, while nine people (14%) didn't see exactly what I was seeing.

Why are these shows so romanticized? I wondered the same thing. Emily MacPherson ('23) shared her thoughts with me, saying, "I think the serial killer shows are stupid because it's such a romanticization of everything that happened and there's a lot of added drama...I feel like they really try to get you to sympathize with the character."

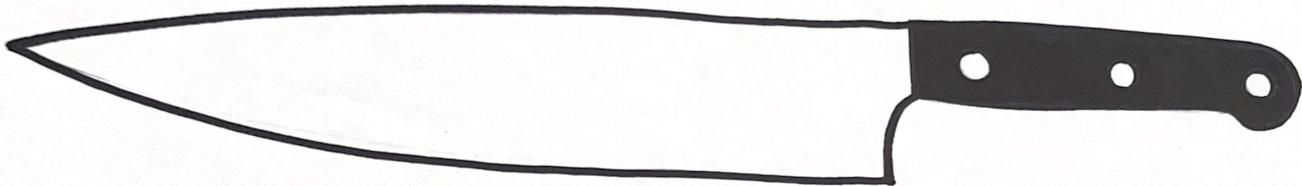
I agreed. When watching the Jeffery Dahmer show, there were certainly parts where I started to feel bad for the hard life of Dahmer, but MacPherson got me thinking about how much of that was truthful, or just to add pizzaz to the show. I felt a similar way when I watched a film about Aileen Wuornos starring another conventionally attractive actress, Peyton List. They glorified the abuse that Wuornos had faced at a young age and the hard life she lived.

Another big aspect that people used to defend specifically

and even worse, defend and romanticize the characters? Sabrina Golden ('23) may have the answer. She had responded to my poll about romanticizing these characters saying, "no one wants to root against Zac Efron." While she was partially joking, she's also very right.

An article was written in October 2022 by Christine Kinori titled, "Is Hollywood Romanticizing Serial Killers?" This article talks about how recently, a lot of attractive actors have been playing these characters because they have a large fan base. If people are seeing their favorite attractive actors in these shows, they'll be more likely to watch it. However, this didn't happen. In the article, Kinori says, "these filmmakers have ended up promoting the notion that serial killers are handsome men deserving of human empathy. Adding to the bad boy narrative that Hollywood has advanced for years, casting handsome famous actors plays into the trope that manipulation, violence, and abuse are traits that can be adored and romanticized."

These shows also don't do any good for the victims or the families of the victims involved. An article also written in October



Dahmer was his sexual orientation. Bailey Barth-Malone ('23) had noticed this, saying, "[I feel] like people are really trying to be like, 'oh poor Jeffery Dahmer, he was gay, and people didn't like him because he was gay.' He was a serial killer. This doesn't mean poor him, plenty of people are gay and don't kill people."

While this did make me chuckle a little, it's the truth. There was a lot of hate that people faced at that time for being homosexual.



Amy Stevenson
@astevey13

Ted Bundy was hot, I'll say it

al, but Dahmer himself targeted people of color and gay men. He was not hated for liking men; he was hated for killing and eating people.

During this, I also thought a lot about the victims and their families. What if they saw these videos of people romanticizing their killers? The victims are barely focused on in these shows and it's all about the backstory of the killer. Johnathan Thorn ('23) thought the same thing. "I don't have an issue with the documentaries, but frankly speaking, [the tv shows] aren't documentaries. They're TV shows with a real person and real events that actually happened. [Producers] take those events and all the trauma from them and turn it into a soap opera."

So why, at the end of the day, do we still watch these shows

2022 by Katie Mather titled "Dahmer" Netflix: The reactions have been weird", the author talks about how the families have felt about the Dahmer show. "His victims' families have publicly questioned the series' need to 'dramatize' and 'humanize' Dahmer. Eric Perry, a cousin of Errol Lindsey, one of Dahmer's victims, tweeted, 'it's retraumatizing over and over again, and for what? How many movies/shows/documentaries do we need?'"

Writing this has put a bit of a damper on my love of these types of shows, and maybe that's a good thing to some extent. I will always love horror, and the dark side of the world, but I will never romanticize a killer because of who plays them. This article is not meant to be a true crime take down, but more of a reminder. These stories are interesting and always will be, but there are proper ways to listen and learn without it getting out of hand.

To everyone out there who loves true crime as much as me, make sure to remember what these people did and how much it hurt others. One thing that I loved about the Dahmer show was a specific episode they did on the back story of one of the victims, Tony Hughes. They showed Tony's family and his life growing up before the unfortunate fate he met when meeting Dahmer.

There are healthy ways to love true crime and enjoy the thrill it gives. Doing what was done for Tony Hughes is just one example. Another important reminder is to make sure you don't fall into a dark spot with it. True crime will always hold a special place in my heart, but after this, I plan on being more cautious with how I enjoy it, and I hope you do too.

- Tess Brown

*Images courtesy of Netflix and Hulu
Title courtesy of fontspool.com*

Go Boys or Go Home: The Differences in Student Sections



It's a Friday night. The stands are packed as you and your friends are squeezed into the front row. The game is intense, students are leading cheers while all decked out in blue to support their school. While picturing this scene, a common memory for most students at Oyster River: did you imagine a boy's game or a girl's game?

The typical student at Oyster River would picture a boy's game, mostly basketball or soccer. Because of the popularity of these games, the scene described above is not something that happens at girls' games. Attendance for girls' sports games has always tended to be far less than that at boys' games. Although this seems like this might be trivial for the female athletes at Oyster River, the low turnout at games can mentally affect those students, lowering their confidence, and in some cases causing athletes to turn away from the sport entirely.

As someone who has played sports all four years at high school, including basketball, I have witnessed and experienced the toll it can take on a team. Whether it's a Monday night game against a random team, or a Friday night game against the school's rival, the student section is consistently empty for girls' basketball.

"If you're a fan of basketball then I don't think it should matter [whether you're watching boys or girls]."

One of the most frustrating moments in my high school basketball career was our late-season home game against Coe-Brown. Our team had already played Coe-Brown earlier in the season on the road, and we had beaten them by double digits. The idea of having another shot at the win this time at home excited me along with a lot of other players on the team.

Using our Instagram account, @realhoopers_101, we advertised the game as much as we could. Although the student section that year had already been disappointing like the empty stands during senior night, we had high hopes that some of the "superfans" would show up for the Friday night game.

The student section remained barren that night, the rejection feeling extra bitter after seeing the social media posts of a packed Oyster River student section on the road at Coe-Brown to support the boys.

Our game was close and ended up in a tough loss. Our team had low energy and felt a student section could have given us the edge against Coe-Brown. I felt endlessly jealous of the boys' team having a similarly close game, yet at the end they were able to pull out a win. Our team fell into

a negative headspace going into the following games and ended the season losing games we should have been winning.

In the process, we lost players, including a senior who quit the team before the season even ended. Although the empty student sections are not a direct problem, it certainly does not make any players stay.

One person who has seen this play out is Don Maynard, Exercise Physiology and Wellness teacher and former girls' Basketball coach at Oyster River. When speaking about the empty fan section, he said, "I think it's something [the girls' team] definitely noticed and maybe felt a little bad about."

Although Maynard does not coach anymore, he says these bad feelings surrounding fan sections is still something he hears, "Whether I'm a teacher overhearing something like that, it bothered me to hear because I felt bad for the girls who work really hard."

Maynard's point about how the girls are working hard can play into the thoughts that many girl athletes have. When seeing an empty student section, it is easy to jump to the conclusion that they are not deserving of fans.

Jumping to conclusion like these can affect the way female athletes perform. One thing that my basketball coach always says is "it is all in the state of mind," basically saying that if you think you can't, you won't. If a team truly believes that they do not deserve fans, they will start to play like it.

Athletic Director Andy Lathrop has noticed this trend and is unsure of the true cause, "is it because of the success of the team? I don't know...So, I think it depends on the sport."

Maynard agreed with Lathrop, thinking that success is what ultimately drives fans to come to games, "that's why [girls' teams] need to win some games this year. Give these [students] a reason to get out and watch." But if the success of a team is what decides the fan turn out, then the 2022

Volleyball team should have had a lot more fans.

One of the things that Lathrop mentioned was that some sports are just historically more popular than others like hockey. However, Lathrop's point doesn't hold true for the girls' hockey team which never has many fans. The same goes for the point about how successful teams get more attention. This theory also would not apply to all teams when looking at the girls' hockey team, who were seeded number one going into playoffs which was higher than the boys.

The underlying reason here could be that students at Oyster River do not find girls' sports entertaining reflecting the common belief of society. When thinking about inequality in sports, one thing that is often looked at is the difference in pay. But the reason for having low pay is because women's sports tend to draw fewer viewers or ticket buyers, therefore generating less revenue.

Maynard thinks that this inequality is unfair, "If you're a fan of basketball then I don't think it should matter [whether you're watching boys or girls]." Maynard says he enjoys watching WNBA and women's college games, and "especially [enjoyed watching] when I was coaching, because what they were doing was way more applicable to me as a coach. I used some of their stuff actually in our games."

Both Maynard and Lathrop think that there are things that students and the school population could be doing to increase the attendance at girls' games. Maynard mentioned things like "threes for tees," where there would be a t-shirt toss every time an Oyster River makes a three.

Things like this aim to increase the student fan population, but the only people who can truly make a difference are the students themselves. If you consider yourself a sports fan and enjoy going to boys soccer or hockey games, try to change it up occasionally, and go out to a girls' game. You'd be surprised at how much the change in the atmosphere affects those playing, and nothing is better than watching Oyster River win!

- Abby Deane
Images courtesy of Madelyn Marthouse

Recognition for the Arts

I was in fifth grade the first time I ever held an instrument. It was a cello, as big as I was. The deep shiny wood on the instrument enticed me, as if it was a shiny gold object and I was a fairy looking for treasures.

Little did I know, I would continue to be enticed by string instruments for several years. Now that I'm a senior and have played six years of viola—and a mere one year on the cello—I've been looking back on my years in orchestra fondly. There's a bittersweetness to coming to the end of something like this—a sense of pride for being so dedicated for so many years, but an underlying sadness knowing the one thing I've loved about high school will soon be over.

Seniors experience this feeling a lot with many things their

“it’s not that our extraordinarily talented and driven athletes don’t deserve recognition like that— it’s just that another just as talented and just as dedicated group of kids deserves it too.”

final year of high school, and usually Oyster River High School (ORHS) does a good job of keeping up with traditions meant to honor the seniors who have participated in sports and even clubs. For athletes, you've probably seen the big fundraised-posters hung up—one for each senior. Each athletics team even has a senior night to be able to show their oldest team members some love. Certain club members at ORHS in the past have received small trophies or certificates to credit them for their dedication over the years, such as drama club and the math team. But what will I, and the other graduating seniors, show for our near seven years in strings or studio orchestra?

Unfortunately, there isn't currently anything in place for graduating seniors who have played in the strings or studio orchestra group for all four years of high school. As someone who, as I mentioned, dedicated about seven years of my life to the strings orchestra group, I feel disappointed. I look at my

“We’ve talked a lot in our music department about starting a music Honors Society,”

peers who play sports and watch them receive bouts of appreciation from other students and faculty in the form of senior nights and pep rallies.

I walk into my school and the first thing I see are photos of athletes lining the walls—and don't get me wrong, it's not that our extraordinarily talented and driven athletes don't deserve recognition like that—it's just that another equally talented and dedicated group of kids deserves it too.

So what can we do for our graduating seniors who have been committed to the music department for the past four years? Between concert attendance and new honors society chapters, there's a number of things ORHS and its community can do.

Andrea von Oeyen, the director of string orchestra at ORHS and Oyster River Middle School (ORMS) said, “Athletics has a very natural way of being able to recognize our kids. It's very public, and it's frequent. They're playing games all the time, whereas our concerts don't happen as frequently,” and I agree.

When you go for about three or four months not hearing about a music group, it's easy to forget about them. Another part of that is the fact that getting the word out for a concert can be challenging. Sports games and athletics have a different

sort of public perception. Concerts are much more private and intimate than a sports game, which is much more open to the public. This makes attendance for orchestra concerts slim, and in turn may make musicians feel unnoticed.

Von Oeyen said, “the music teachers are in charge of getting our musicians recognized, whereas athletics has a director, so we might not be able to get the word out about concerts and events as well.”

There are several things that the music department and the Oyster River community can do to bring more of a spotlight to concerts put on by the ORHS music department. It starts with showing up. Concert attendance is the key factor when it comes to helping ORHS musicians feel appreciated and recognized. While concert dates are set well in advance, sometimes people aren't entirely aware of the upcoming performances. This puzzles me seeing as update emails announce concert dates, the concert date is posted on the sign outside at the front of the building, and sometimes it will be included in the morning announcements at ORHS. However, spreading the word doesn't mean as much if the community doesn't follow through. Most of the time, the audience of the orchestra concerts are mostly parents and family members of students who are performing. While that's obviously still great, and the support does not go unnoticed or unappreciated, the members of the strings and studio orchestra would love to be able to share their music with the rest of the school.

It's typical of a group to gain popularity over time within the community as they become more established, but the strings orchestra in particular has blown up over the past four years. In a class of 65 students, you won't find a 65:1 student-to-teacher ratio anywhere else in the district. “We used to do a lot more [concerts] in the form of assemblies, and that was a really pub-

lic way to get recognition for our musicians. Because of how much the program's grown, we don't really have a place at the high school where we can do that anymore, since there's no room on the stage for all of us to play together anymore," von Oeyen said. With essentially no space to put on a concert at the high school due to the strings orchestra's size, the music department has put on concerts at the Oyster River Middle School (ORMS) concert hall for the past few years. They have not put on an "assembly" like concert since the program has exploded in numbers. While I don't personally believe this is a reason as to why student attendance at concerts is low, it could be a factor.

While concerts bring recognition to the string and studio ensembles as a whole, there's a lot more to be done to help bring recognition to students who participate in music on a more individual level. As I mentioned earlier, as graduating seniors like myself start to prepare for the rest of our lives, we'll also start to think about the things we've accomplished over the past four years.

Many students with high performance in their academics are involved in organizations like National Honor Society, which builds community and allows for recognition within school- and at graduation. There is also the French National Honor Society, and the Spanish National Honor Society, which gives students recognition for their academic achievements. Unfortunately for music-devoted students like myself, ORHS doesn't have a chapter of Tri-M Music National Honors Society, which would recognize musicians at ORHS, and give them a place to build community.

"We've talked a lot in our music department about starting a music Honors Society," von Oeyen said. "We're working on that right now because we feel that the [music] program is developed enough, and our staff is at a point where we feel like we could take that on and honor our students that way."

If ORHS had a chapter of the Tri-M Music National Honors Society, students would be required to be enrolled in a music class for at least two semesters and maintain a 3.0 GPA in all their classes. The benefits of ORHS having a chapter of Tri-M

may seem superficial to some, but for musicians who are interested in building a community surrounding music, leadership, decision-making, planning, and positive influence, a Tri-M chapter could be just what they need to feel more integrated and recognized in the ORHS community.

While I recognize that an honors society is not a big poster with our faces on them, and it's not a senior night, it's a group which builds community and brings people together in the same way that those things do. Having a Tri-M chapter at ORHS would help seniors who have played an instrument in the music department feel more accomplished in music.

On a smaller scale, and more personal level, von Oeyen says she still tries to make her seniors feel appreciated. "I try to do an orchestra dinner for just our seniors at the end of the year after our last concert. It's not public recognition necessarily, like sports, but the sports banquets aren't exactly public either," she said.

And von Oeyen is right—the recognition is not public, but she still found a way to help make her seniors' final years feel fulfilling and special. Despite strings and studio orchestra not having a plethora of traditions for seniors like the athletics department, there's still ways to help make them feel appreciated and give them recognition for their dedication.

As a school, to help give our devoted graduating string players the recognition they deserve, we should attend their concerts, keep up with events and fundraisers they do, and recognize that they are not less deserving of beloved senior traditions that

other dedicated students get to experience.

Since ORHS prides itself on their attentiveness to the arts, I'd love to see the seniors who have grown up with the music department receive a little attention for it. Whether that be in the form of posters and senior nights like athletics, a certificate like the math team, or the cultivation of a Tri-M chapter, this ever-growing group of driven people deserves some love for their years of hard work.

- Ava Gruner

Image courtesy of Rebecca Noe

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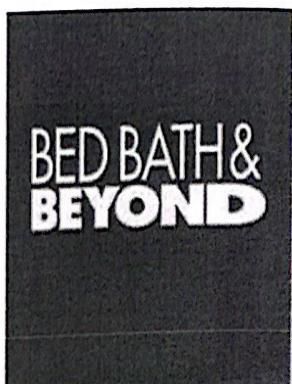
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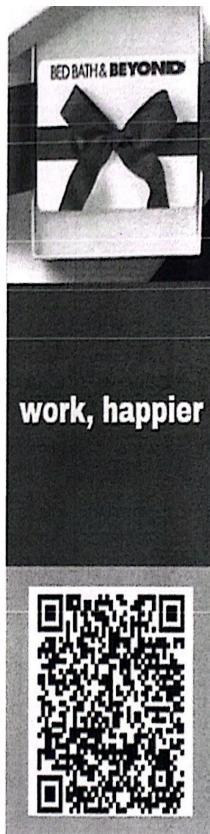
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